# CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

No.14 MARCH 1985

85p

EXCLUSIVE!

**EVERYONE'S A WALLY**

—LIFE OF WALLY—

mikro-gen

EXCLUSIVE!

GYRON

firebird

EXCLUSIVE!

MOONCRESTA

incentive



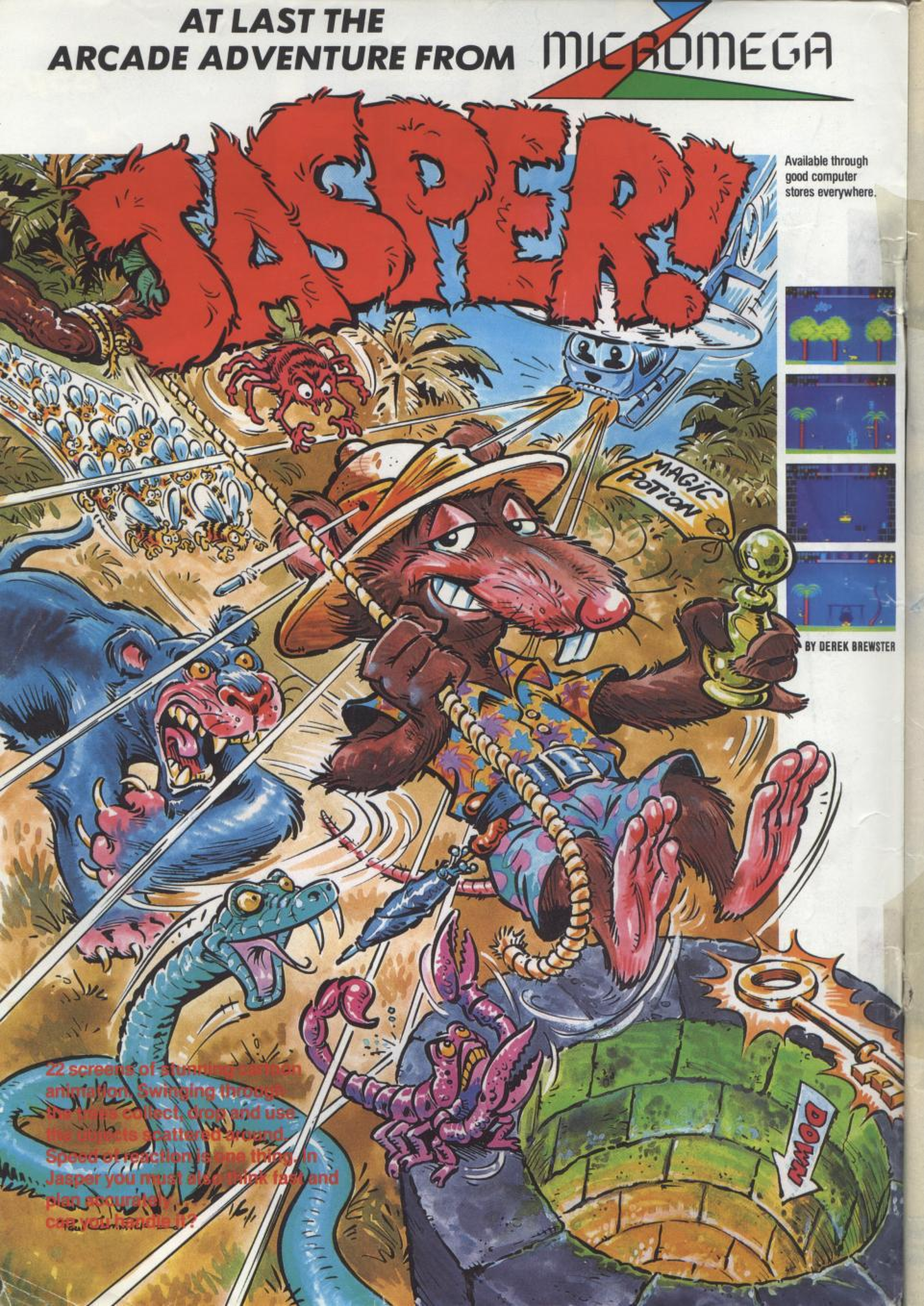

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# CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

ISSUE 14 MARCH 1985

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### Features



### Regulars



### D.I.Y

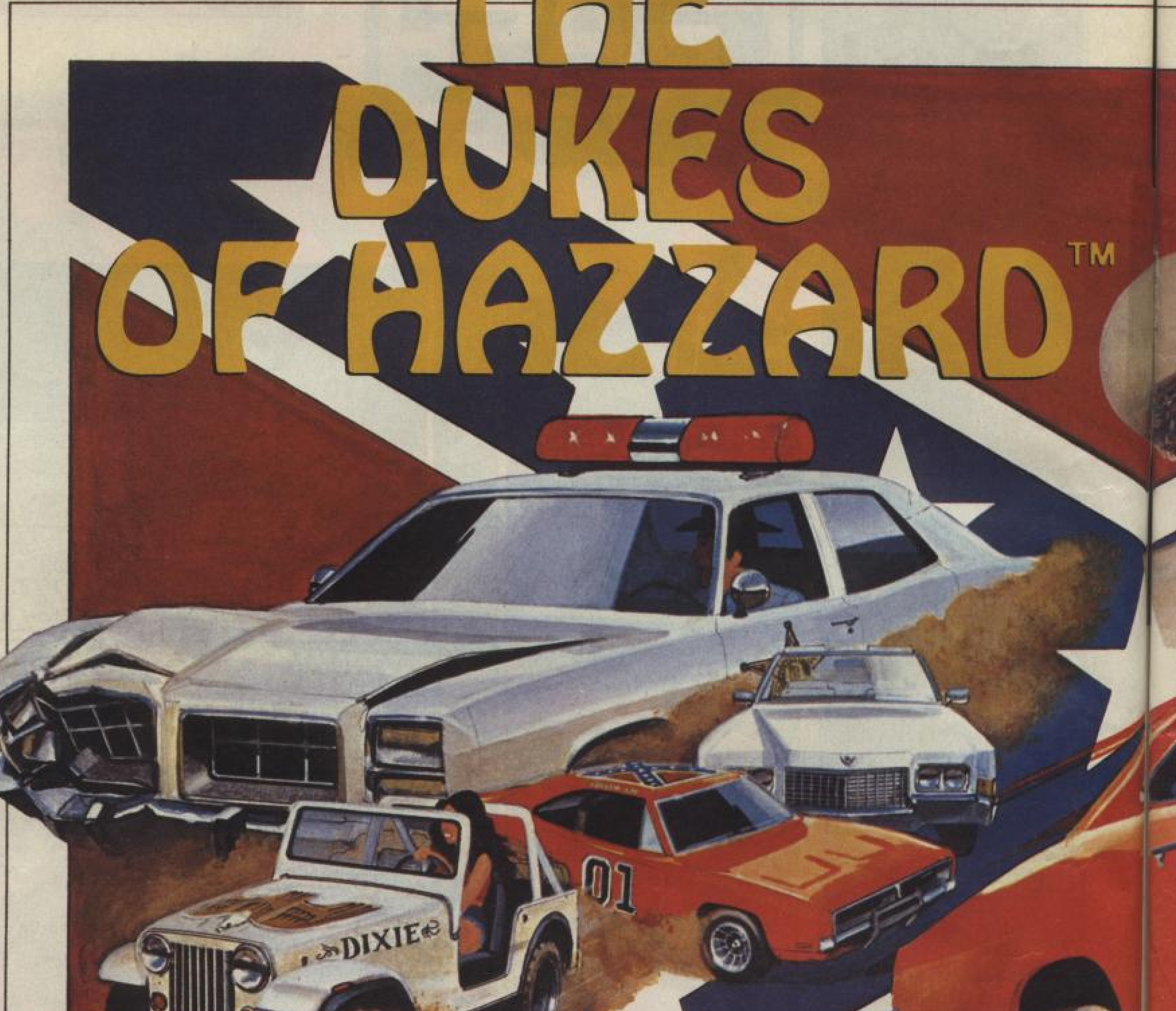


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GYRON, FUTURE PROJECT, MOON CRESTA, SPIDERMAN, WIZARD'S LAIR, plus loads more reviews. . . .

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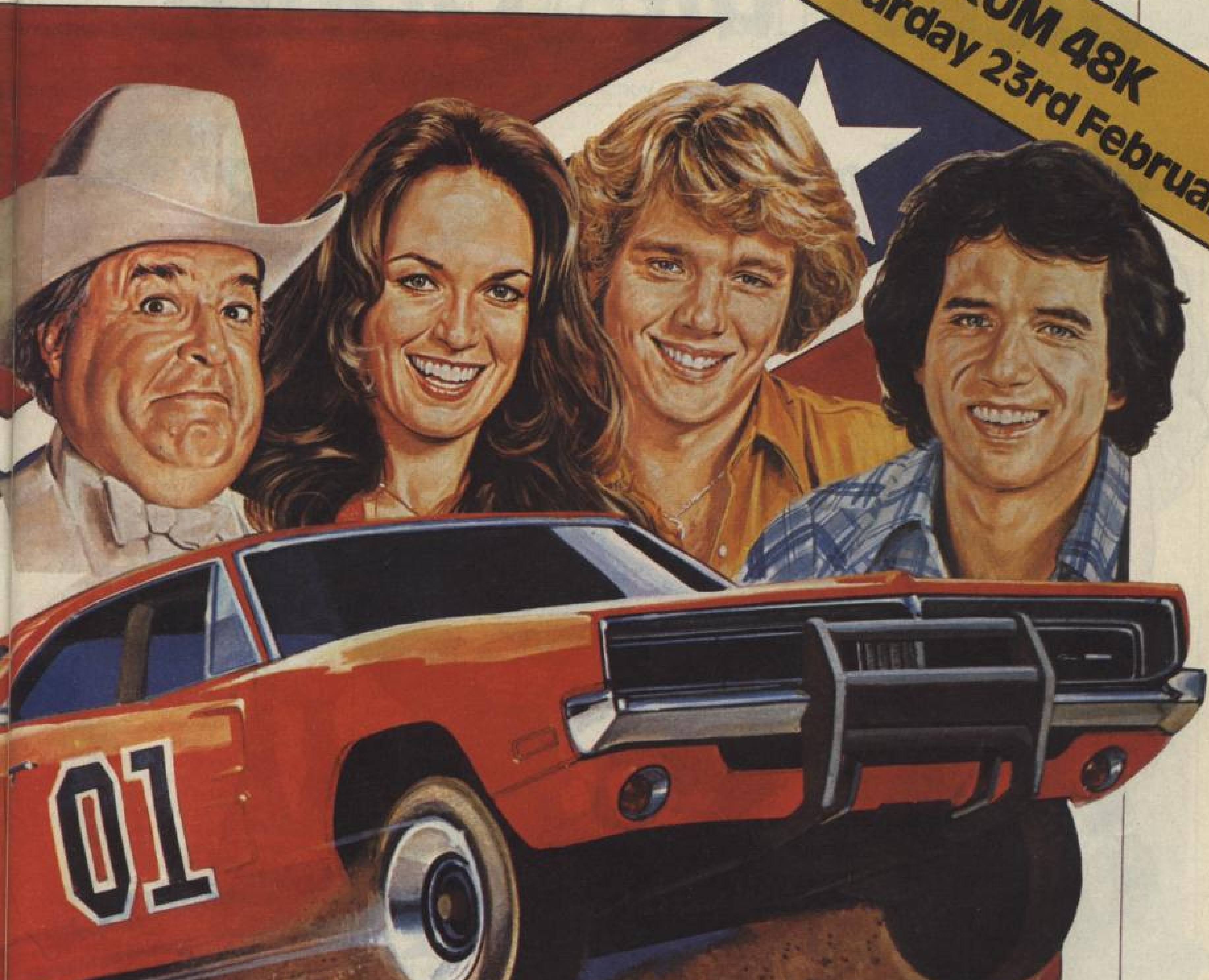
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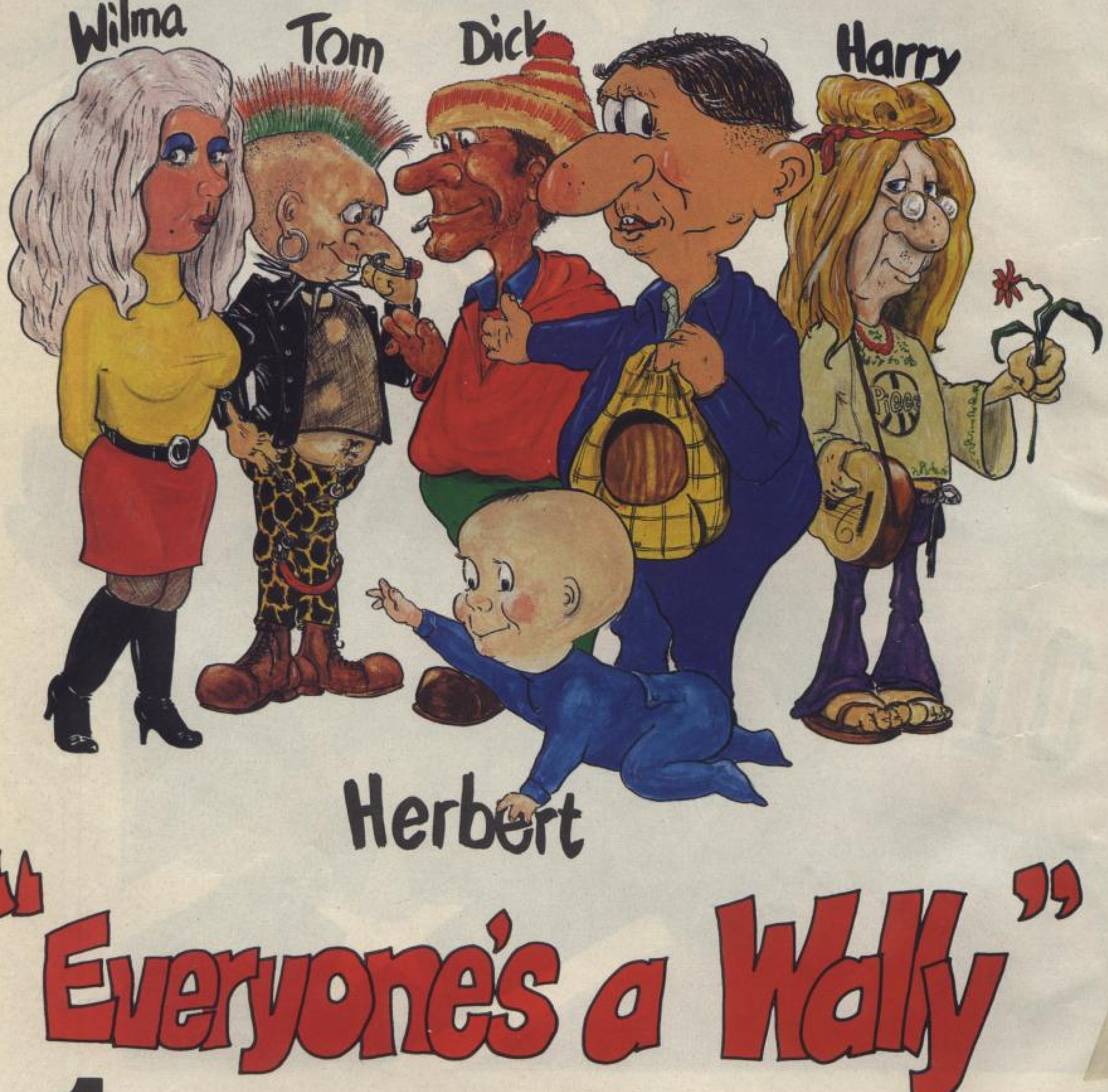

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## ADVERTISING AND REVIEWS

I really get sick when people start throwing their weight around on the grounds of 'knowing the business'. Mr. Jones of **Interceptor Micro's** is one such. He telephoned to complain about a lot of inaccuracies in Derek Brewster's review of Interceptor's recent adventure game *The Jewels of Babylon* (CRASH February issue) after receiving 'loads' of phone calls from owners of the game. He went out and bought a copy, then phoned. Although Mr. Jones was unable to detail all the inaccuracies of the review, he was at pains to point out that whoever did the review knew nothing about the Spectrum or programming. I asked him if he knew who Derek Brewster was and Mr. Jones said he had never heard of him. I asked Mr. Jones if he knew anything about the Spectrum in that case and informed him of the games Derek has written. Mr. Jones then replied to the effect that if this reviewer wrote software for other companies then he could understand why the review was written the way it was and implied that Interceptor would hardly be booking ads if those were the sort of reviews they got. He also implied, when I pointed out that Interceptor had never advertised in CRASH, that that was why they got a bad review, 'You're having a go at us,' he said. Mr. Jones seems to have forgotten that *Message from Andromeda* was well received by Derek in review and that *Forest at World's End* was a medium review if not a wow. Were we likely to 'have a go' at Interceptor Micro's for not advertising, then the best time would have been some months back. Before people like Mr Jones start to throw slanderous comments about the British Telecom system, I wish they would get their facts as correct as they expect Derek Brewster's to be. If Mr Jones really knew the Spectrum market he would know and have seen that many advertisers over the months have received good reviews in CRASH and never advertised and the reverse is also true — big ads, poor reviews. Mr. Jones concluded by saying that he would be writing to other magazines to inform them that CRASH employs the services of professional programmers who write games software for software houses to do reviews, the implication being that they are biased. Hardly anyone who reads CRASH could fail to know what Derek Brewster has written and for whom. I told Mr. Jones he could write to whom he liked (including us with a list of the inaccuracies in the *Jewels of Babylon* review) and tell them what he liked. But my advice to him is to look a bit more thoroughly at CRASH before he makes such a fool of himself. And my advice to anyone is not to raise the spectre of advertisement versus good reviews number ever again. I get annoyed.

## ULTIMATE TROPHIES

As the close of the Ultimate Christmas competition draws near, we have been flooded with masses of *Underwurlde* and *Knight Lore* maps of varying proportions. The CRASH team were all astonished, however, when the Ultimate trophies arrived, which as you can see from the pictures, are really beautiful. Additionally, Ultimate sent through six large boxes each containing an Ultimate cap, two sweatshirts, a T-shirt, a large diary and the Spectrums with six-packs of games. Having looked at some of the entries I am filled with despair! The choice is going to be a very hard one! Results next month.



The trophy for the best KNIGHT LORE map.



The trophy for the best UNDERWURLDE map.

### GAMES REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE



### ADVERTISERS INDEX



ULTIMATE goodies pack containing sweatshirts, T-shirt, cap, diary and Spectrum

## MAGS ON THE MOVE

There have been some shake-outs this past month among the computer magazines. Publishers have been predicting the demise of some titles because there are too many on the news shelves. Editors and publishing executives of London-based mags have been extensively reported in the trade press stating that others will go but theirs will survive because it's the best. **Tony Tyler** of *Big K* went to great lengths in *Computer Trade Weekly* to say that only good quality magazines like *Big K* would be left. Two days after his pronouncement IPC Magazines axed *Big K* with little warning. It wasn't selling well enough and had failed to grab a significant chunk of the advertising base, and when it did get ads it was giving them away at loss-making prices.

Argus Press are also making a change, *Games Computing* becomes *Computer Gamer*, but whether the change of name will do much to lift their limp image is another matter. And of course the biggest crash of all has been that of *Personal Computer Games* from VNU Business Publications. Despite *PCG*'s popularity, it too failed to get the right prices for ads, without which a modern magazine cannot remain healthy.

In a sense, a lot of this is good news for CRASH, since obviously there are less mags around competing for advertisers' money. In contrast with other publishers, we are expanding by launching a new title in April when **ZZAP! 64** is released. I'm surprised by how many letters we receive that say the writer has a Commodore 64-owning friend who is jealous because there isn't a 'CRASH for Commodore owners'. Well from April onwards there will be.

Heading up the editorial team is **Chris Anderson** who was editor of *PCG* until he heard about **ZZAP! 64**. He brings with him **Bob Wade** and a few other writers from *PCG* including the White Wizard and the talents of **Jeff Minter** for a column. CRASH readers who don't like hearing about other computers shouldn't worry therefore that the Commodore magazine will interfere with CRASH as **ZZAP! 64** has an entirely separate editorial team and in fact will be written elsewhere although production will take place in Ludlow. You will notice that there is an advertisement for **ZZAP! 64** in this issue — it isn't to persuade you to buy a Commodore 64! But it does have some interesting relevance to CRASH readers who have Commodore-owning friends, so don't ignore it!

## CRASH ON TV AGAIN

**I was away for two weeks holiday after the New Year and when I got back it was to discover that Television South West (TSW) had rung to ask whether they could feature CRASH and reviewers Matthew Uffindell and Robin Candy on the 'Soft Spot' feature of their popular programme FREEZE FRAME, which goes out on Saturday mornings. FREEZE FRAME is aimed at young people, is recorded with a studio audience of school kids, and incorporates several interesting items every week including pop videos a live band and the 'Soft Spot' computer games section.**

**The programme in which CRASH featured also included a piece on teenage romance illustrator GARRY COBB, a duo called MIME THEATRE who conclude their stage show with a satirical version of the famous TV puppet series THUNDERBIRDS, and the latest record from COOK DA BOOKS who were live in the studio. I went down to TSW's Plymouth studios with Matthew and Robin for the ride and to record the event in diary form for CRASH.**

**Tuesday 29th Feb. 4.00pm**
Arrive in Plymouth. The weather is foul, pouring rain and misty. Only Mat has been to Plymouth before — when he was 6.

**4.05pm** Pull up outside central Post Office to ask way to TSW studios, send Mat out to get wet. He's back in seconds with the info, what's more, he remembers it.

**4.10pm** Park car outside building. TSW is a fairly new place which used to be the old Westward TV studios before the ITV franchises changed hands. We're delivering a bundle of CRASHes to the programme producer MARCUS KIMBA. I take my pullover off to wrap around them so they won't get soggy in the rain. The sacrifices we make. Matthew and I discover a juvenile streak in Robin — he likes automatic doors and spends the minutes as we wait to be greeted by the producer jumping up and down on the operating mat.

**4.15pm** Marcus comes down to Reception and introduces himself then takes us upstairs to the FREEZE FRAME production office. Like any TV studio complex, TSW is a rabbit warren. They put numbers on all the doors so people won't get lost. It doesn't help. In the office the FF programme director is sitting in a bemused state trying to get to *Hampstead*. We shake hands and he asks us if anyone knows. Matthew politely informs him that Derek Brewster does all that sort of stuff. The two men give Mat and Rob a brief outline of what will happen tomorrow, who's doing and saying what. They want to ask Mat how he got into all this and then get him to introduce Rob as a reviewer. Rob will then look at a game and talk about it. Robin looks a bit alarmed but agrees. Marcus then takes us down a floor to have a look at the studio which has already been set and lit ready for the morning. The 'kids gantry' is on the left, the Soft Spot desks on the right. Five huge cameras skulk under protective covers. 'That's where all the kids sit?' Robin asks looking at the arrangement dubiously. I can see him making catapult sight line assessments between the area where they will be and the Soft Spot desk. It looks like an easy shot. I ask how big the audience will be and Marcus tells us 45. Rob's face looks no happier. Marcus then tells us that last week's was a pretty rough school, ours will be much nicer.

**4.45pm** We return to the car and find the hotel which is just a few minutes walk away. TSW have taken care of everything. There is about three hours before a car will call to take us to dinner. Mat wants a walk on the sea front and daftly, I agree. It pours with rain, we're soaked. It was from here that Drake spotted the Armada while playing bowls (it obviously wasn't raining then), and from here the Mayflower pilgrims set sail for America (undoubtedly raining). These great moments of history pass Matthew by, he's wondering how to say what on the morrow. I give him a pep talk based on my vast experience of being on TV (twice to date, once with Mat anyway). To make him feel better about the ordeal I tell him what it was like when I filmed interviews with people and some anecdotes about the funny things that went wrong. It doesn't make him feel better. We return to the hotel drenched.

**6.00pm** Sit in hotel bar for a drink to wait for the car. Mat and Rob feeling better now and starting to tell jokes about what they will really say.

**7.30pm** Taxi collects us and takes us to Mo's Bistro.

**7.30½pm** Arrive at Mo's Bistro. The 30 seconds cost a quid. I'm pleased to see taxis are the same everywhere. Already seated at the table are Marcus, Carrie Gray (the young new co-presenter of Freeze Frame and who used to be in the British group that entered the 83 Eurovision Song Contest), and the young illustrator Garry Cobb. A few moments later Andrew Dawson and Gavin Robertson (the Mime Theatre) arrive. Dinner and conversation is very lively but Rob falls silent and I wonder if he's alright, but it turns out that he didn't know he disliked garlic bread.

**Wednesday 30th Feb. 8.00am**
At breakfast Garry Cobb reveals he's terrified. They told him he will be interviewed standing amongst the kids. Robin smirks — if he's seated at the Soft Spot desk doing a game, then it will be Matthew who runs the 'kids gantry' gauntlet. Mat isn't amused.

**8.50am** Mat and I take some air on the sea front. It isn't raining. I tell him deep breaths help before the red light comes on. He starts deep breathing, then feels faint.

**9.10am** Walk to the studio and wait in reception for the 'Hostess'. Everyone's names are up on a 'welcome board'. The hostess turns out to be a delightful lady called Jen who has obviously dealt with nervous super stars before — she's kind, informative and firm. We're taken upstairs and shown into a sparse dressing room shared with Garry, who's just finishing make up.

**9.25am** Jen returns and takes us along to Make Up. The boys are horrified. The two make up girls seat them before mirrors in barber chairs and start spotting chins and cheeks with paint brushes. On an overhead monitor Carrie Gray is talking to the studio kids. The cameras move about 'blocking in' shots ready to record. A voice comes out of the speaker, 'Five seconds to cheer. . . .' They cheer. Mat and Rob are being powdered down to ensure their noses won't shine. I look up to see a rigidly frightened Garry waiting on screen. Fortunately the CRASH review team have their eyes closed against the powder.

**9.45am** Back to the dressing room. Tension growing. I'm beginning to feel as awful as they are and I'm not even going on. Mat says he feels like a puffed up poof. Robin's eyes are running from the powder. The make up girl thought he looked tired — now he just looks anguished. 'I'm not nervous!' they keep saying unconvincingly.

**10.20am** Still waiting in the dressing room. Mat says he wishes it were all over. It's like being in a dentist's waiting room. There's noise outside. Is this it? No, it's tea break. We're taken to the canteen. Garry is looking relaxed and cocky. He's finished of course and is regretting all the things he didn't get to say about his work. It's hot in the canteen, Mat and Rob are beginning to sweat their make up off. After tea break we're led to the studio to watch. The studio kids are lively. The crew are recording a bit on the nature of laughter using puppets. The director disappears up stairs to the gallery. 'Right, here we go,' calls the floor manager. They take the entire sequence twice to get it right. Beside me, Carrie Gray is rehearsing her interview with the two Mime Theatre guys. Mat and Rob are taken off to Accounts to get paid. They get paid quite a lot. It seems to help. I join them in the Viewing Room and watch the Mime Theatre get interviewed and start their act. We think we're on soon but Lunch Break intervenes.

**12.30pm** The three of us leave the studio to go and buy a blank VHS cassette so we can have a recording of the programme after it's been edited. In the sunshine in Mât and Rob look healthy, but it's only the miracle of make up. We check in WH Smith to see if there are any CRASH. There aren't — they sold out and are waiting for more.

**2.00pm** We're taken down to the studio as the Mime Theatre do some pick up shots. A sound engineer wires the boys up with radio mikes and tiny lapel microphones. They stand at the edge of the chaos of camera cables watching and looking remarkably cool after all the nerve-wracking waiting. Mime Theatre do two more takes, then another. It's good.

The floor manager comes and takes Mat and Rob over to the Soft Spot set. All the cameras shuffle in and take up positions. The audience are holding copies of CRASH. Matthew goes into a huddle with Marcus and the presenter, Ian. Technicians set up the computers and monitors while Carrie sits on the gantry and records a link shot to a pop video of Chicago's latest, *You're My Inspiration*.

**2.10pm** Matthew is positioned to stand behind the desk with the presenter while Robin is seated at the Spectrum. He loads *Knight Lore* from microdrive. The sound department puts a microphone under the Spectrum and then plays around with an echo chamber to create science fiction noises with the Ultimate game's sound. I can see Mat laughing at something Ian has said. A good sign. The director appears for a minute and there is another huddle. The audience are kept amused by watching the Chicago video on a monitor, while stage hands start extending the gantry podium ready for Cook Da Books afterwards.

**2.15pm** The director returns to the gallery. Ian takes up position next to Matthew and they line up a shot of the last CRASH cover. I can see Mat taking surreptitious deep breaths. Robin looks over his shoulder against the bright studio lights searching with his eyes for me. He smiles and doesn't look very nervous.

**2.20pm** Robin starts playing *Knight Lore*. The floor manager counts down and waves his hand — they're away at last — no they're not. There's a hold.

**2.23pm** More set up discussions and some voice rehearsals with Robin. The director wants Ian to ask Rob specific questions about the game. Some last minute lighting adjustments. Robin looks relaxed but his voice is tight. Mat is chatting animatedly with Ian.

**2.27pm** 'We're ready!' Countdown starts again. Robin starts playing. I watch on the monitor, a close up of the game screen, then a cut to Ian and Matthew. Ian introduces Matthew who hesitates and then warms up. Robin plays and talks and then it's all over at 2.34 with a link from Ian to Cook Da Books.

**.45pm** The three of us stand and watch Cook Da Books surrounded by the audience as they mime to playback their latest release *Golden Age*. Carrie Gray who is standing beside us says she thought Robin was clever to play all the while and talk without getting killed off on the game. Robin shrugs and tells her he had an infinite lives poke in. Her illusions are shattered — but I reflect she should know better, after all, this is TV where everything is a cheat of one sort or another.

**3.15pm** The recording finishes and Marcus comes over to ask how the boys feel. They both feel great now it's over and Matthew says he would like to appear again. He's got stardust in his eyes — or is it make up? We're given a cup of tea and depart. Later on, stopping at the same motorway service area we stopped at on the way down to Plymouth Robin says very sagely, 'When we stopped here yesterday we were just nobodies. Now we're just bigger nobodies.'


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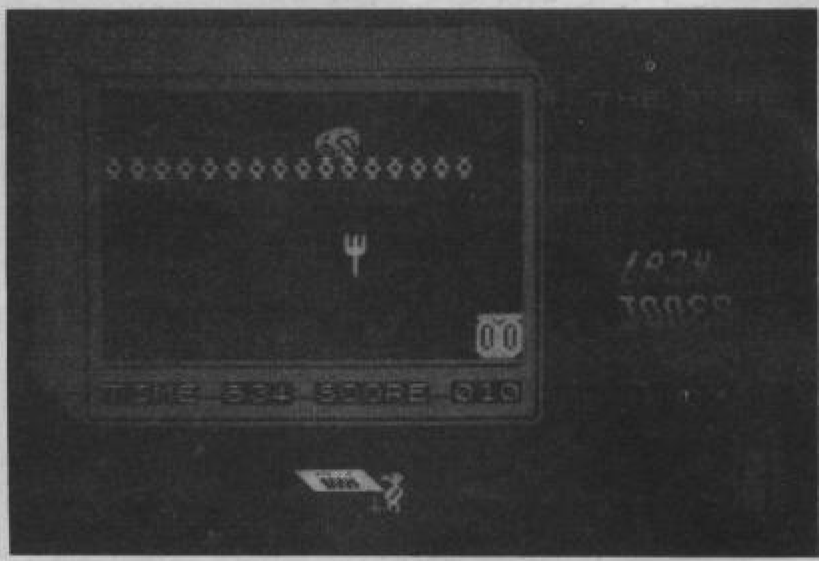


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# LAZY JONES

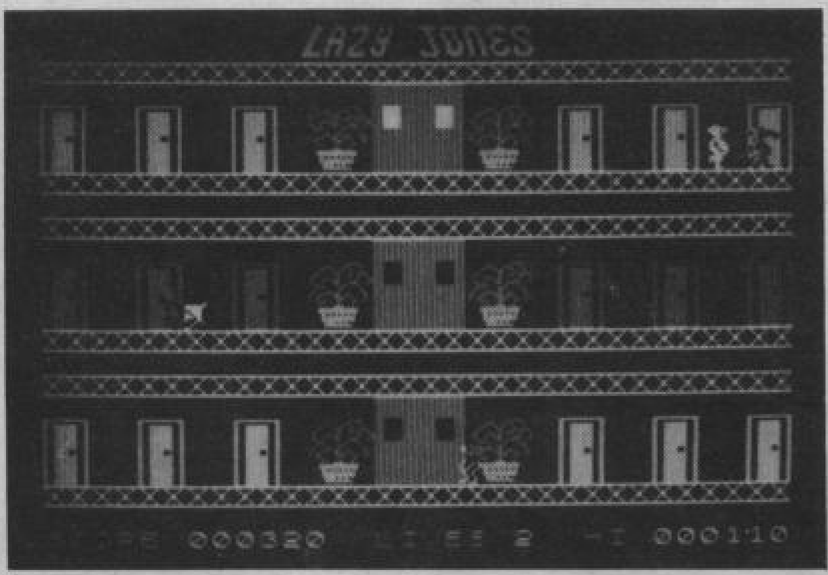
**Producer:** Terminal
**Memory required:** 48K
**Retail price:** £6.95
**Language:** machine code
**Author:** Simon Cobb



One of the video games in LAZY JONES.

*Lazy Jones* is a character who works in an hotel but who shirks his duties in favour of entering the eighteen different rooms to play the video games contained therein. Of the eighteen




The hotel corridors with the promise of a game behind most doors, and work outside.

rooms, most contain games but some are broom cupboards and the like where Jones can hide from the work trolley or the ghosts of former managers who banish him from life on contact.

The rooms are arranged as six on each of three floors, three either side of the central lift. Lazy can jump over obstacles and by pressing fire when in front of the lift doors enter them to change floors, selecting up or down at will. Pressing fire in front of a room door takes him into the room. The scene cuts to the room interior with a large TV set bearing the legend GET READY. An animated Lazy is seen to walk across to the set and stand by the ready joystick. A game then appears on the TV set which is controlled by the main game controls. The video games are all variations on the theme of popular arcades, a Space Invaders, a 'Chuckie Egg' variant, a Defender type, a Frogger type, a Breakout type and many others. Lazy is only allowed to go into a room once until all have been visited. Subsequent visits will reveal that the game has progressed a level of difficulty. Each game has a falling time limit and a score line.

## CRITICISM

● 'It's about time Terminal brought out a decent game, all their previous Spectrum games have been a load of rubbish. To say the least, this one is different. I wasn't quite sure what I was meant to do at first until I opened a door and in I stepped. The door slammed behind me and a TV appeared. I walked over to my joystick and I started playing the first of many games, not original games, Oh no, that's too easy, but arcade mini--copies. I suppose you could call this Terminal Software strikes back Part One. It seems as though Terminal has looked at most of the fun games on the market and seem to have put them all into one program, although somewhat simplified. Wow, you might say, if I buy this tape I won't have to buy any other tapes, but that isn't really the case. Although *Lazy Jones* does contain many games, it does lack a bit in content since the fun is really contained in the games within the game rather than in the main game itself. The graphics in this game are all very nicely made up, smooth and well animated, and on the whole, fairly big. I especially like the way 'you' have a long nose, somewhat like Piman, and you walk in a lovely manner. The games that you find in the rooms are quite accurate copies of the games they imitate, they are snappy, to the point and quite playable in themselves, although one or two are boring and take a long time to get through. Graphically, then, the game is quite pleasing to play although I don't think it will be terribly addictive in the long run.'

● *'Games compendiums tend to suffer from having to cram too much into too little space to do justice to each game. To come across the Space Invaders in the Video Games room of* Pyjamarama *was a thrill and amusing. In* Lazy Jones *the whole game is a series of Video Games rooms, but unlike* Pyjamarama, Lazy Jones *has no real game content around the rooms beyond avoiding the various obstacles — you tend to get killed through bad luck rather than a lack of skill. However, the individual arcade copies are really quite good (with a few boring exceptions), and the detail in them remarkably good. The result is a game which is a lot of fun to play until you have played all the arcadelets, after which it gets thinner and thinner, thus lacking long lasting appeal.'*

● '*Lazy Jones* is a sort of compilation of all the old sort of Spectrum games all put together to make one game. But to be honest the game content is a bit lacking. I don't think this game is going to be a great hit because it has very limited appeal, you only want to find out what's in each room and that's it. Overall, quite a good game which might appeal to people like Space Invaders, Froggers etc etc.'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys:** Q/A up/down, O/P left/right, M to fire
**Joystick:** Kempston
**Keyboard play:** responsive
**Use of colour:** good and varied
**Graphics:** good, smooth and well animated
**Sound:** not a lot
**Skill levels:** progressive difficulty
**Lives:** selectable between 1 and 9
**Screens:** 19
**General rating:** a novel way of presenting a games compendium, but an average game in itself which would probably prove to be of good value to younger players.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 55% |
| **Graphics** | 79% |
| **Playability** | 76% |
| **Getting started** | 72% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 51% |
| **Value for money** | 45% |
| **Overall** | **63%** |

# HELLFIRE

Producer: **Melbourne House**
memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author:

Greek mythology seems to have become a computer game vogue just recently, what with Ocean's *Gift from the Gods* and now this new game from Melbourne House in which the player re-enacts the trials of Ulysses. This three-stage game has the player guiding the ancient Greek hero up the slopes of Mount Olympus, whilst avoiding falling boulders and the stony stare of the Gorgon. Then he has to outwit the minotaurs in the Temple of Knossos and finally avoid being trapped in a maze with a Reptillian Assassin and a Fireball Thrower. The ancient Greeks were a fun-loving lot and would probably have approved of the violence in computer games.

In *Hellfire* you effectively have three very different one-screen games. They have different graphics and require a different sort of thinking and arcade skill. On the first screen the hills are described rather as a child might draw them and Ulysses can run and jump to get from hill top (or ledge) to hill top. He can only stand on the darker bits. Meanwhile boulders bound down the hills threatening to knock him off. Occasionally a Gorgon, possessed of the power to turn men to stone with a single stare, will appear and Ulysses must raise his shield to reflect her gaze.

Getting safely to the top sends you into the second screen, a temple made of three tall columns and three levels plus the floor. The exit is at the top but the way is blocked by dashing minotaurs. Running behind a pillar transports you to another floor and another pillar. The trick is to discover the correct route without getting speared by a nasty. Fortunately there is an ancient Greek trampoline which enables you to jump to any level.

The third screen is a scrolling 3D maze from which you must find the exit. You can use a mace to kill your opponents and more maces can be found in chests scattered through the maze. The maces can also be used to smash open exits.

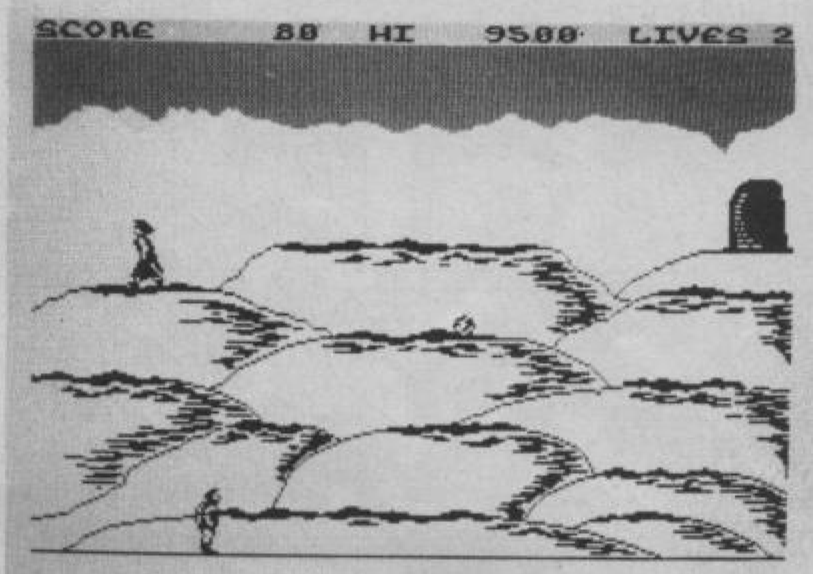
Incidentally, the cover of this game has been designed by Steinar Lund, on whom we carry an article in this issue.




## CRITICISM

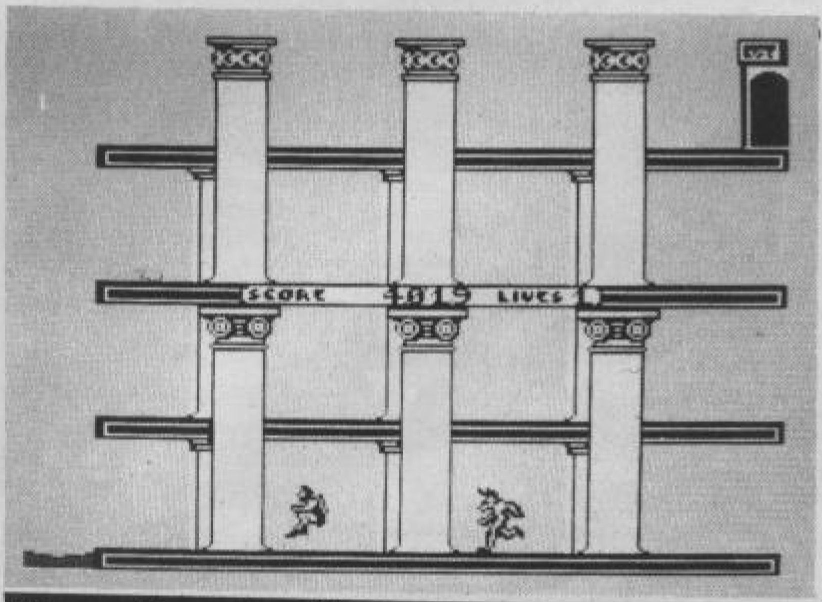
● '*Hellfire* is a highly original platform/maze game. It has very good graphics (Melbourne Draw) and all the characters are well drawn and animated. Unfortunately there is no sound which makes the game slightly less playable. the first two screens are really just to warm you up for the last one in glorious 3D, as they are quite simple. But once you do get to the final screen you find it impossible to complete as the chests, which are supposed to contain extra maces, don't (or if they do, I don't know how to get them)! When your last mace is used up you get transported back to the first screen again.'

● *'Melbourne House always seem to go for games which are slightly different to what everybody else is doing, and* Hellfire *is no exception. It has the usual great graphics you would expect from them, and the game's not too bad either. The colour is a bit sparse but is used to complement the 3D effect on the third screen quite well.* Hellfire *is quite addictive, but it can be off-putting if you totally fluff up the first screen. Overall quite a good game, which is hard at first, but after you've got into the game, I don't think it will take too long to complete it.'*




***Screen one with a striding Gorgon at the top, a boulder half way down and a stationary Ulysses looking puzzled at the bottom.***

● 'First off, I think it should be said that the three little screen shots on the inlay are misleading, because they show all the screens in glowing colour, which simply doesn't exist in the game. There is colour but it is much flatter and more simple than Melbourne House are pretending on the inlay. The first screen, for instance is only in black and white with a tiny strip of blue and grey at the top, while the second is black and white with a pale blue background. Despite this, the graphics are extremely good, especially the animated characters. The first screen is hard until mastered, which takes a bit of doing. the second is a visual puzzle which also takes time, but



The second screen from HELLFIRE. Ulysses is the one flying in the air after being hit by a rampaging minotaur.

then is simple once done. Whereas the third screen seems simply baffling to me. Obviously that's going to take a little longer. But to be honest there isn't a hellfire of a lot here to do. The maze screen is obviously the main part of the game, but if it is any bigger than you can see when you first enter it, I think it would have been more clever of Melbourne House to suggest it, because without knowing that I would have to say that this game has great graphics but is a poor game.'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys** Q/S,A up/down, I,O,K,L/P,ENTER left/right, Z-V raise shield, B-SPACE jump
**Joystick:** Kempston, Sinclair 2
**Keyboard play:** responsive, although a bit of a handful in tight spots on screen 1
**Use of colour:** very simple
**Graphics:** excellently drawn and animated
**Sound:** none
**Skill levels:** progressive
**Lives:** 5
**Screens:** 3
**General rating:** two reviewers liked it, one thought it was lacking in game content.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 71% |
| **Graphics** | 85% |
| **Playability** | 73% |
| **Getting started** | 69% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 66% |
| **Value for money** | 68% |
| **Overall** | **72%** |

# MUTANT MONTY

Producer: **Artic**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Karl Jeffery**

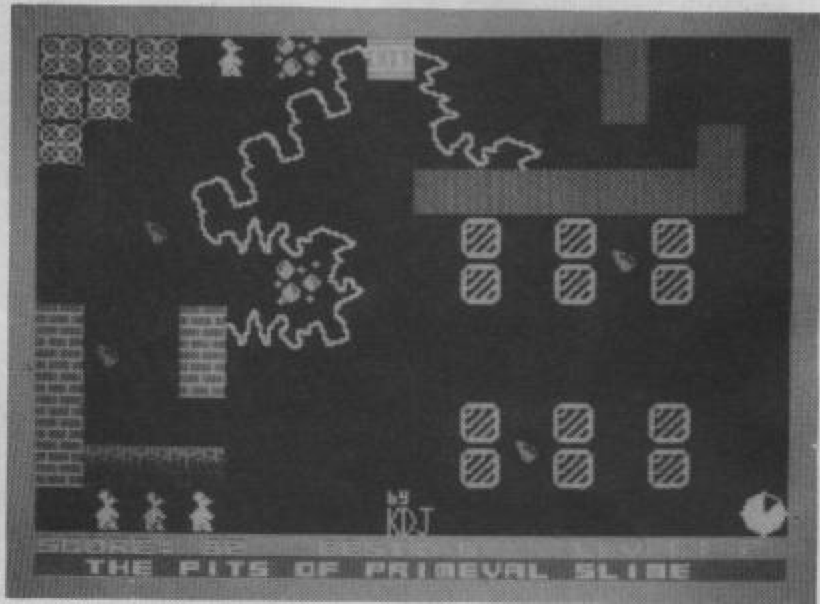
A little late this review, because the game arrived at an awkward moment in the last schedule. Like most people Monty has two main ambitions in life, to get rich quick and to become a hero. So says the inlay. there are 40 screens to wander through, collecting large gold nuggets on the way. That makes him rich. To turn him into a hero there is a distressed damsel to rescue.

The screens are broken up into various boxed areas with the gold nuggets placed in the most difficult positions to get at. Nasties parade up and down, left and right, making timing an essential ingredient. Only once all the nuggets have been collected can Monty exit a screen. There is a time limit set by the small clock face at the bottom right which ticks away your bonus score.

## CRITICISM

● 'At last Artic have brought out a game. It seems years since the last one, and it's quite good too. I think *Mutant Monty* is a lot like *JSW* in feel, although the game itself is nothing like it. The graphics are smooth and neat, and the sound didn't drive me barmy. Controlling Monty is weird to say the least — left and right you get a slow and a fast movement depending on how you press the keys; up and down you only get a slow speed, which is a bit confusing at first. I found *Mutant monty* very playable and addictive, but almost impossible to play with a joystick.'

● *'This game seems to be on the theme of* Manic Miner *to a large extent, although some of the animation is quite a bit better than in* MM*.*




*The game itself is very, very difficult to play; perhaps too difficult in my opinion, as it seems to take all the fun out of the game. Everything that has been put into the program is neat and tidy. Animation is quite wonderful. Some considerable effort has been put into the design of the graphics which are colourful and very detailed. Just collecting gold seems easy at first, but it soon becomes apparent that timing and nimble fingers are required. To be able to get to some objects you need to be within one pixel of the correct position otherwise you're dead. One thing that is unique to this game is that it has variable momentum, the longer you keep a key pressed, the faster your man will travel; so the quicker you release the key, the slower you will travel. A very nice feature.* Mutant Monty *is quite playable but its addictive qualities are severely affected by the fact that it's so difficult to play, which is a great shame.'*

● '*Mutant Monty* as a game doesn't actually fit into any particular category. While the idea is similar to a platform game, there are no platforms. The graphics are good and colour is used well. There is a continuous tune which is quite good, but if it gets annoying you can turn it off. It is quite playable but it did strike me as being too hard and you are prevented from getting far into the game straight away. The demo lets you see some screens however. Overall, not a bad game and one which should prove a challenge to the better games player.'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys:** CAPS, X/Z,C left/right, P/ENTER up/down
**Joystick:** Sinclair 2, AGF, Protek
**Keyboard play:** responsive, well positioned, and featuring variable speed control
**Use of colour:** excellent
**Graphics:** very good
**Sound:** continuous tune with on/off facility and spot effects
**Skill levels:** 1
**Lives:** 5
**Screens:** 40
**General rating:** a very good game, perhaps a bit too tough.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 78% |
| **Graphics** | 84% |
| **Playability** | 76% |
| **Getting started** | 82% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 65% |
| **Value for money** | 76% |
| **Overall** | **77%** |










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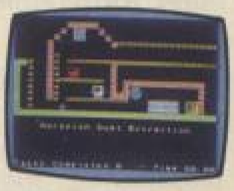
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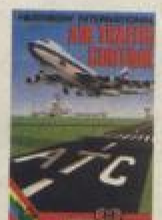




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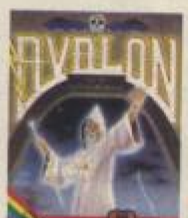
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A CRASH Smash

# GYRON

**Producer: Firebird**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Philip Mochan, Ricardo Pinto, Dominic Prior, Mark Wighton**

*Gyron* is described by Firebird as, 'the most challenging computer game ever written', and it has taken its four young programmers a year to write. It comes under Firebird's 'Gold Range', and its fairly high price reflects both the work that has gone into its creation and its complexity as game and program. Typically, it is also quite hard to describe easily!

In brief *Gyron* can be described as a four dimensional maze game. The large maze is seen by the player three dimensionally, using excellent wire frame line graphics. In addition to the maze walls there are offensive towers which fire at your hedron and vast spherical balls which roll about the maze and give it its fourth dimension, for these balls are effectively moving walls of the maze. That's putting it very simply!

The object of *Gyron* is to penetrate the defences of an enemy computer complex and thus to reach and destroy it. The computer architects that constructed the system were faced with the task of designing a defence system which though providing formidable resistance to a saboteur, would still allow access for purposes of reprogramming and repair, to authorised personnel. Faced with the problem of eliminating the computer, scientists developed a project, whereby a 'Hedroid' (you) is dropped into the gate that opens periodically in the energy field above the maze. The Hedroid is a remote control robot (a revolving icosahedron for the technically-minded) which sends information back to its controller (the player of course). It is armed with a laser.

Once inside the maze the hedroid is faced with two interlocking defence systems, towers and balls. The balls are immune to the hedroid laser and kill on contact. The maze is divided into zones (indicated by the colour of the hedroid symbol on screen), and each zone has a cycle time which effectively controls the movement of the balls. Solutions to individual configuration problems are only available at certain times during cycles, and to the overall system (game) only four solutions are believed to exist; those used by the designers themselves. The towers are designed to restrict movement within the maze. They 'point' and fire in one of the four compass directions. However they can be affected by the hedroid laser. If a tower is hit in the back it may retract, although some reappear instantly, and others may be linked so that as one tower retracts another appears elsewhere. Fire from the towers kills, and only may be avoided by passing under it hard by a wall, or by using a ball as cover.

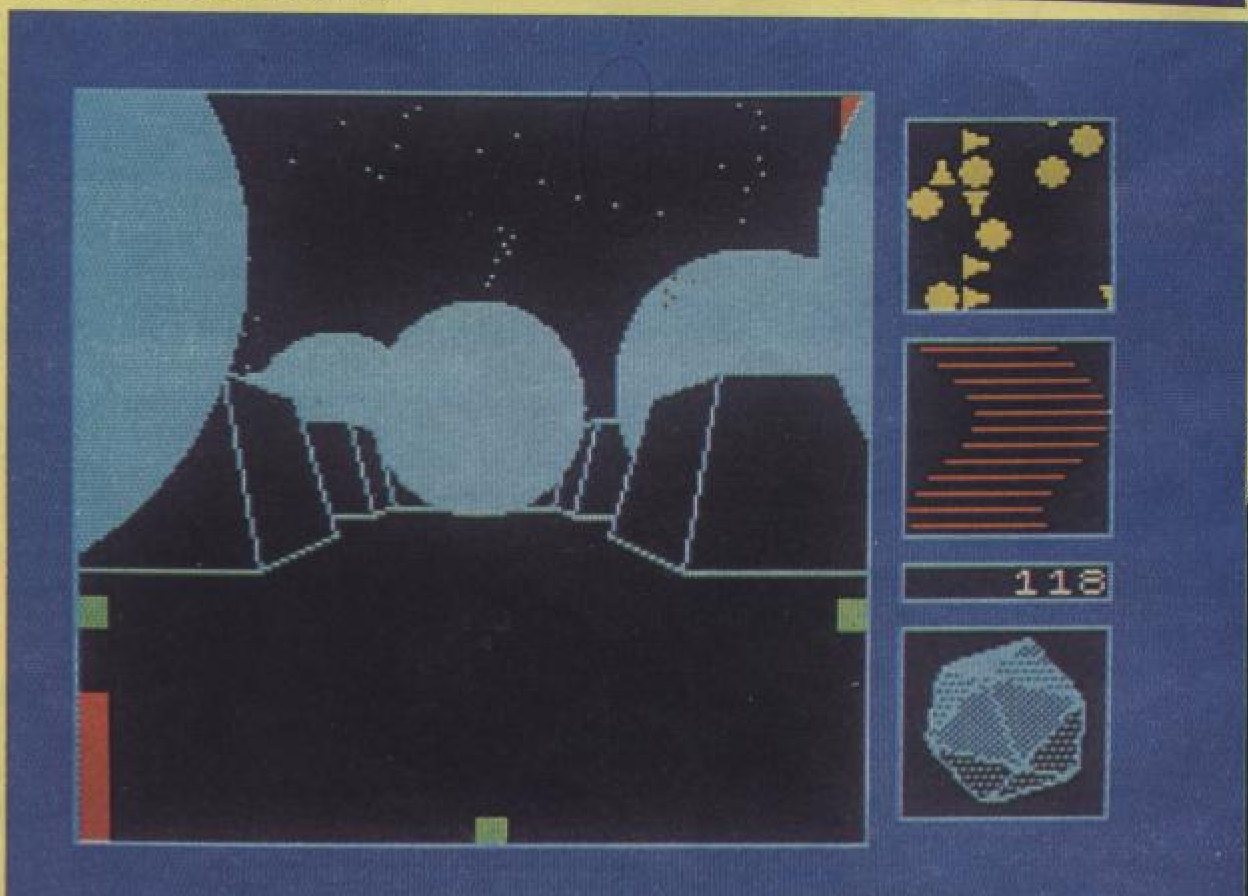
The screen display consists of a large square view of the maze seen from ground level in full 3D. Balls and towers are seen as a solid blue. A green square at the base indicates sideways movement, and two green squares on either side indicate your position relative to the side passages which are shown by red bars. Once the side green squares are within a red bar it is possible to turn by moving in the direction until you meet the side 'wall', whereupon the picture cuts to face along the new passage. To the right of the viewscreen are four panels. At the top is a radar scan of the immediate area which shows towers and their firing direction, and the moving balls. 'You' are always at the centre. This radar scrolls continuously as you move in the maze. Below it is a waveform damage indicator (bumping into walls causes damage). Below that is a time linked to the central computer. Finally there is a panel with a revolving hedroid which is colour coded to indicate the maze zone occupied by the hedroid.

*Gyron* is a hard arcade maze game, but it is as a thinking game that it really scores. To complete it there are only four possible solutions, and Firebird are so convinced that very few will ever do so, that they are offering a Porsche 924 motor car to the first person to solve it before October 21st




The marvellously animated title page

The 3D maze of which the balls make up moving walls



# G·Y·R·O·N

1985. An eliminating competition will be held should more than one correct solution appear.

Other interesting statistics include: a game cycle that only repeats after 100,000 years, hidden view 3D graphics, three colours per character square, and two games on one tape — the *Atrium* is an easier practice version of the main game. The program size means that there is only limited sound available, but fortunately *Gyron* is accompanied by the kind of detailed playing instructions that some other software houses would do well to look at.

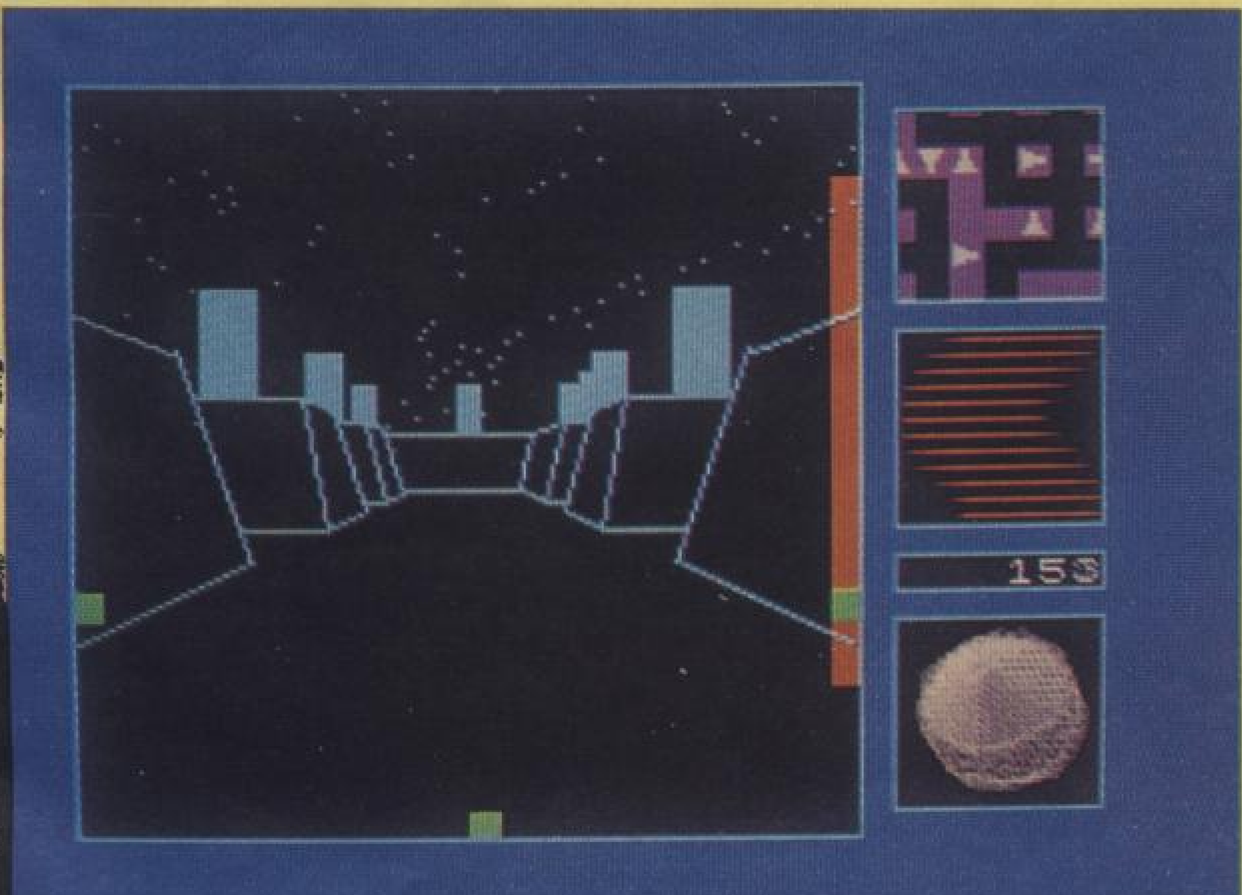
## CRITICISM

● 'Now let's get one thing straight — you are not going to defeat this game within five minutes of loading it. In fact I wouldn't be surprised if no one defeated *Gyron* for a long, long time, otherwise why would Firebird be offering a Porsche as a prize? The graphics are breathtaking, especially the 3D of the maze and towers. I particularly like the revolving icosahedron. The sound isn't up to much, but the brilliance of the game makes up for that. The only thing that's a bit off-putting about the game, apart from the loads of instructions, is that it's so hard to play, but once you grasp the idea of what to do and how to control yourself, it's just a matter of practice. You will need a lot of time and patience to get anywhere with it.'

● *'Could any game be worth the price of a Porsche? My goodness, what an incentive to complete this game! You may think 'no problem', because you've completed so many maze games before. But this one is different, this one is unreal, this one is a nightmare! Four eyes, a logic-thinking nature and a desperate energy for speed and excitement are just a few of the factors needed to play this game. Never has there been a 3D planned maze like this before of such complexity; and it's not just a question of finding your way around the maze either as you have to avoid the rolling balls and deadly towers that zap without warning. Your objective is to reach and destroy the central computer which controls all ball and tower movement — and it has to be done against the clock as well.* Gyron *is really very difficult to play but very enjoyable but once you grasp the principle ideas. Graphics are truly wonderful, the 3D perspective seems to me to be reality, and the balls that move through the maze work with uncanny realism. A brilliant piece of programming that has been very highly polished and perfected. This is probably the type of game you will find in the arcades — yes, it is of that standard. Hyperbrill!'*

● 'A stunning atmosphere is produced from the loading screen onwards — as loading completes, the drawn head comes to life, winks and spits out the hedroid that is 'you', then fades away to leave 'you' quietly revolving, waiting the commencement of the game. A marvellous opening to this graphically amazing game. The detailed graphics continue throughout, from the solid-feeling 3D maze (surely the most convincing 3D maze yet produced) to the animation of the rolling balls. The screen layout is exceptionally clean-looking and the side panels are all beautifully animated. The game itself is very tough, even dispiriting at first as you die within seconds (shot through the back usually), but then you realise the importance of the radar and the tower positions shown on it. Timing is important, as the balls only allow you to move from sector to sector at specified times — too late and it really is *too* late! But as an easy practice round, there is the *Atrium* version on side two which is much easier. *Gyron* is a remarkable game, as much puzzle as arcade and definitely with a dash of strategy. It should keep a player occupied for hours, days, months probably (maybe years for me!) — and I always wanted a Porsche too. Never mind.'

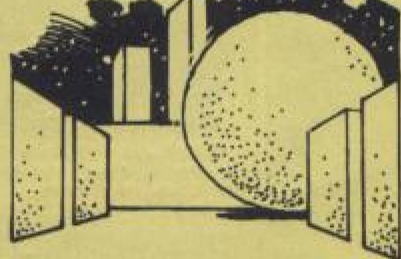
In the distance are the killing towers seen on radar as triangles




## COMMENTS

**Control keys:** cursor keys and zero to fire, but a user definable option is provided in a pre-loader
**Joystick:** all major options, accessed through pre-loader, you can't get back to the menu to change your mind though, due to the program size
**Keyboard play:** highly responsive, takes getting used to 'momentum' effect
**Use of colour:** simple use of colour in viewscreen, but effective, overall very good
**Graphics:** excellent 3D with perfect perspective feel and very smooth continuous animation in all details
**Sound:** none
**Skill levels:** two games — hard and Porsche-worthy!
**Lives:** 1
**Screens:** continuous scrolling
**General rating:** an astonishing program which requires quick arcade responses, a great deal of thought, and should provide hours and hours of satisfying frustration!

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 92% |
| **Graphics** | 96% |
| **Playability** | 90% |
| **Getting started** | 92% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 94% |
| **Value for money** | 92% |
| **Overall** | **93%** |



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# M·O·O·N C·R·E·S·T·A

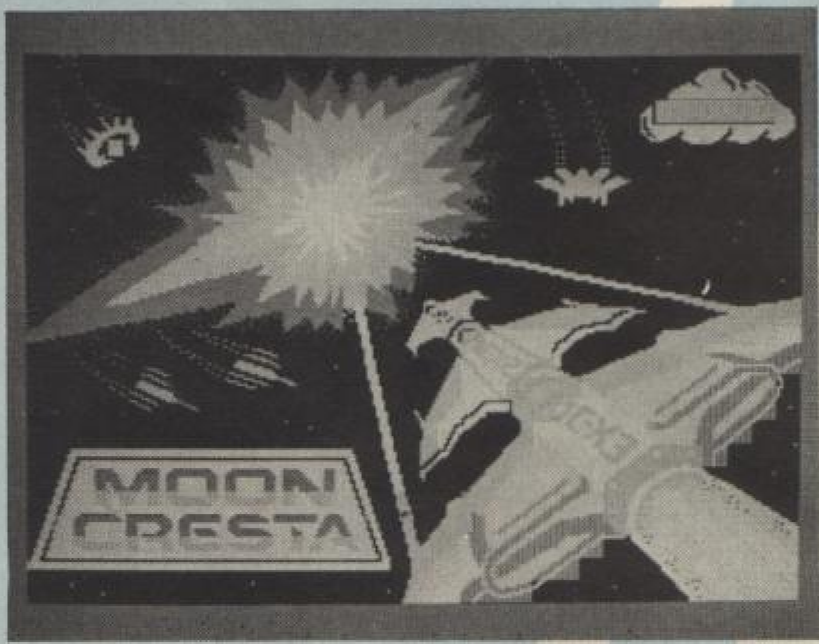
## (Trip to the Space War)

# MOON CRESTA

Producer: **Incentive Software**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Tim Walter & Philip Taglione**

Here's a new game on an old theme that should get the blood racing again! Away with the namby-pamby arcade/adventures! For zap-happy arcade freaks Incentive's new *Moon Cresta* will revive the good old rainy days spent hurling ten penny pieces into the maw of a dedicated arcade machine. This is a loving (and official) re-creation of the Nichibutsu arcade original, right down to the attract mode with a colourful title page and a message reading, 'Moon Cresta — A trip to the Space War — Try it Now! — You can get a lot of Fun and Thrills!' The major change between this, the first ever home computer version, and the original is the panel allowing you to select between the redefinable keyboard controls and joystick options.

*Moon Cresta* is a classic shoot em up set against a downward scrolling starscape. Your three lives arrive at once as a three-stage rocket which flies to the top and separates, leaving the nose stage to descend afterwards to the base of the screen ready to do battle. If you lose that life then the two remaining stages repeat the process, leaving you with the middle stage to fight on. The first stage has a single-firing laser, the second and third stages each have dual-firing lasers. Your craft moves left and right along the base of the screen while the nine different attack waves try to destroy you. There are four waves consisting of blue then yellow aliens (which split into a smaller alien when shot) and a red then magenta wave of fighters before you are faced with a docking of the first stage with the second for bonus points. The bonus is based on the time taken to dock as the top craft slowly descends, wavering about and guided by the left/right control and fire to thrust.



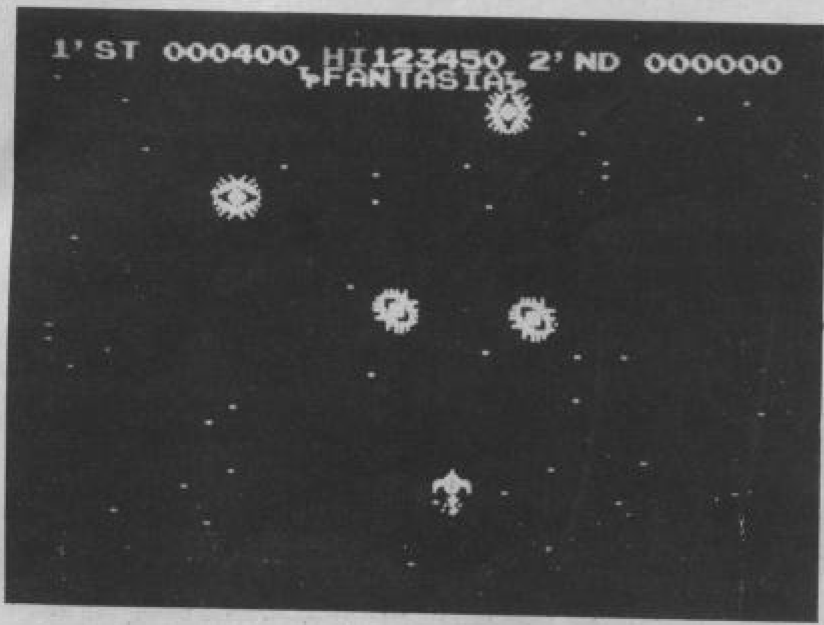

This bonus sequence is then followed by five waves of dancing aliens which include diagonally opposed asteroids and white blobs that turn wrap around missiles if not destroyed in time. Depending on how well you are doing you can earn the right to fight with either two or three stages together as the speed of the aliens hots up. The full display area is used with score lines superimposed at the top.

### CRITICISM

● 'This is a very, very close copy of the original, right down to the scrolling stars and the between-waves tune, and I'm pleased to say that it has also caught the exciting atmosphere of the original too. Really one of the best shoot em ups for an age. The level of difficulty and skill required is well pitched to make it one of those games you are just bound to come back to again and find hard to leave when you are playing it. Docking is not at all easy — I was fooled by first watching someone who had learned the knack and could do it almost every time. Fast reflexes and a strong right hand are needed to get those hi-scores on *Moon Cresta*. It's a pity that being an officially licenced version it's a pound or so more than it might have been, but nevertheless it's still well worth the hours of aching hands at the price.'

Your 2nd stage Moon Cresta, threatened by the Red Hordes






Plunged into the depths of space on stage one screen one

● *'It's been a long, long, long while since someone has had the guts to try and copy a true arcade game onto the Spectrum.* Moon Cresta *is one of the best, or should I say the best arcade copy I have yet seen. Personally I love these type of games for two main reasons first being that they are not complicated to play, where you have to learn rule after rule; and second, especially on the higher levels, it's a great asset to have to have an uncanny amount of skill (or as Roger Kean puts it _ 'luck'). Getting down to the nitty gritty of the game and why I think it is brill, is that the graphics are very clear, precise and accurate to the original. They are fast and very smooth and an incredible amount of colour has gone into this game. Stars constantly scroll in the background, twinkling as they change colour. This game really puts you in the spot of the great Space War. Sound is also a prime achievement, faithfully reproduced from the original in all aspects, very punchy. This is one type of game that I never tire of, except for my rapid-fire finger which wears out long before the enthusiasm. As you must be able to tell, I found* Moon Cresta *a tremendously addictive game.'*

● 'The attack waves in *Moon Cresta* might superficially be thought of as being similar to an old 'Galaxian' type pf game, but they are much more sophisticated in their movements in fact, and well aided by the amazing graphics which are super-fast and completely flicker-free. The speed of the aliens, in fact, is astonishing on the higher levels, and turns your humble Spectrum into something that looks like a dedicated games machine. Playing *Moon Cresta* is very simple fun, the sort of soothing mindlessness that concentrates thought wonderfully! And concentration is needed! At a time when the emphasis tends to be on complicated arcade/adventures or third generation platform games, I think it's brave of Incentive to release an old fashioned shoot em up like this, and I'm thankful that they have. Great fun!'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys:** user definable, three needed
**Joystick:** hardly needed, but almost any via UDK
**Keyboard play:** very responsive
**Use of colour:** excellent
**Graphics:** extremely fast, smooth and detailed
**Sound:** smashing
**Skill levels:** progressive difficulty
**Lives:** 3
**Screens:** nine attack waves plus docking sequence
**General rating:** excellent, playable, addictive and good value for shoot em up freaks.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 89% |
| **Graphics** | 91% |
| **Playability** | 92% |
| **Getting started** | 89% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 90% |
| **Value for money** | 89% |
| **Overall** | 90% |

*Reviews*

# THE BIZ




Producer: **Virgin Games**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **BASIC**
Author: **Chris Sievey**

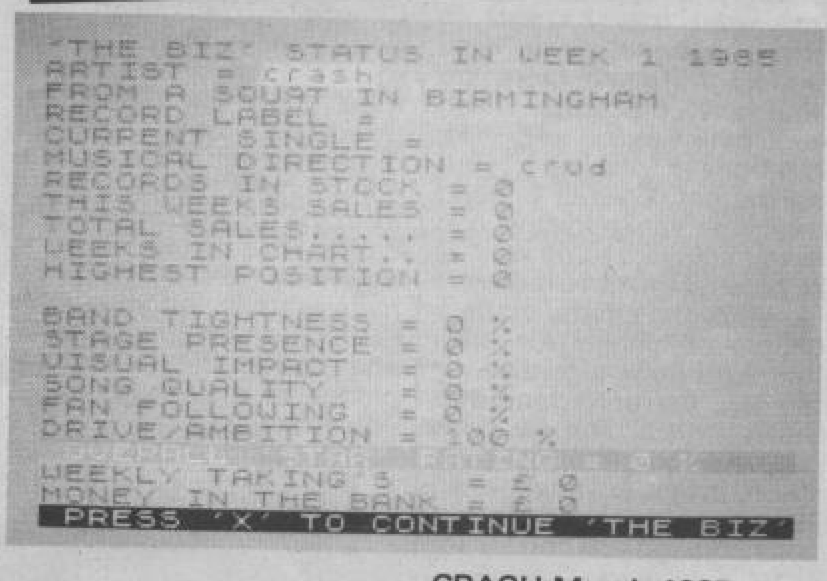
Chris Sievey, author of *The Biz* is probably best known for his 'hit' single *I'm in love with the girl on the Virgin Manchester megastore Checkout desk* — or perhaps he's not, depending on your knowledge of pop music. If you haven't heard the song, maybe this is your chance, as it is included on the tape along with seven other 'real life hit singles' by Chris Sievey and the Freshies.

*The Biz* is a strategy simulation which allows the player to make his way in the world as a pop superstar, and it is so true to life, claim Virgin (who should know), that record companies are even now signing up people who have succeeded in *The Biz* even if they have never played or sung a note. Taking this with a sizeable pinch of salt, *The Biz* however, provides a sufficiently wide range of menu driven options, random horrors and musical mismanagement to provide an insight into the business and an entertaining strategy game. It follows a fairly standard routine of balance sheet and option menus. The main balance sheet provides a percentage status on subjects such as Band Tightness, Stage Presence, Visual Impact, Song Quality, Fan Following and Drive/Ambition. It also tells you where you are operating from, your record label (if any), current single, musical direction, records in stock, weekly and total sales, chart position, takings (on gigs) and money in the bank. The percentage ratings are affected by elements like the mood of the band, rehearsal time and general togetherness of the band.

The active menu offers Promotion, Musical direction (style of music), Recording a song, Pressing a record, making a video, or options to phone your manager (for advice), phone a record company or a solicitor, or start the week off by phoning your agent, who will then offer you various gigs to do. If you go to a recording studio you will be asked your label and the song's title, but insufficient funds may prohibit you pressing it or promoting it.

It is possible to record a single, press and release it on your own label, even with the record companies rejecting you (major labels are noted for their unadventurousness with new bands), and the excitement really begins when it starts appearing in the charts (around the 190–150 position!) and you are shown the local radio stations that are giving it airplay. If you can survive long enough between cheap gigs to earn money and pressing enough copies of a song to get it charted, you may even

*Starting off from a squat in Birmingham, your weekly status sheet looks a bit gloomy.*

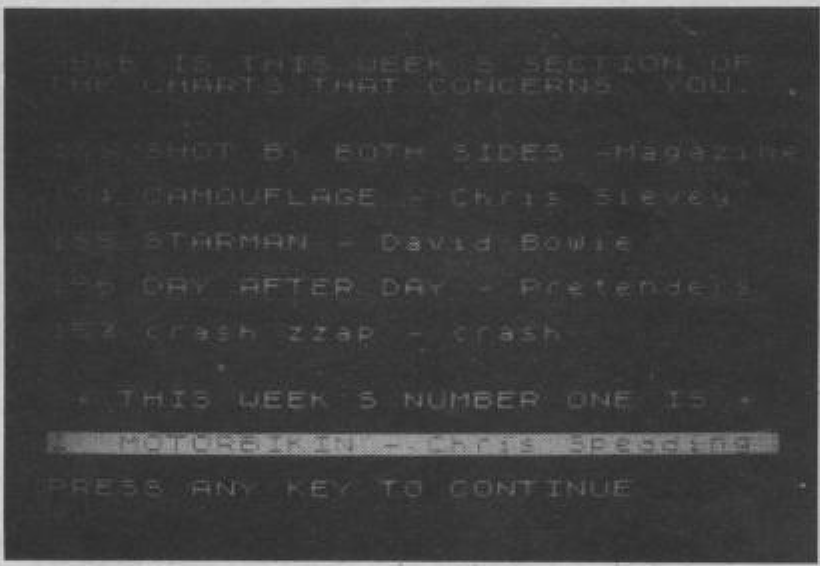


make it into a good contract by dint of hard work.

The interaction of promotion, a good song, good stage presence and plenty of rehearsal, makes *The Biz* a rarely complicated simulation in which, mercifully, upsetting random elements are not as silly as is often the case with this sort of game, and sometimes the random elements are nice as well as bad.

### CRITICISM

● 'The cassette contains the program, an interview with Chris Sievey and 8 singles to help you in search of fame, fortune and a number 1 single. Before playing, I suggest you listen to the interview on the tape, which will teach you a little about the idea of the game and how to achieve the best results. You may also collapse laughing at interviewer Frank, who would make a great promoter for Mikrogen's Wally! On to the game: I decided to be a working class pop group from Manchester of all places. You can get a manager, but think before signing — if he's a con man then a solicitor will help, but he will charge by the second. Keep on at record companies, it will pay off in the end. Each week you contact your agent and see what's on offer. Don't expect a lot at first, you will probably begin playing at the local church hall for £16 after expenses. But as you improve, so do the gigs and the payment. If you have a manager he will be taking a cut of this, but if he's worth his salt he will be trying to get you radio interviews etc. To help your cause you can use several promotional aids starting off with leaflets distributed locally, but eventually you may be able to afford national radio ads. During the game there are additional problems which you will encounter, like someone 'nicking' your equipment. Overall I found the game very addictive and extremely hard to do well in. At present I've got a record to No 56 in the charts, made a couple of singles for Mike Reid and done gigs all over the UK, yet only gone into the red once. *The Biz* does not have fab graphics, it's in BASIC in fact, but after breaking the ice and getting into it, you soon find you don't want




***The relevant bit of the charts — low as you might expect!***

to get out. To all aspiring stars, the lure of a chance to make a recording for the first person to get to number 1 will obviously be tempting.'

● *'I think I can safely say that* The Biz *is the most enjoyable strategy†simulation I have played so far. It has a charm and fascination that goes way beyond any of the others and actually manages to arouse excitement as singles make the charts and climb, only to be dumped through lack of money to press enough records! I thought that the background atmosphere is helped tremendously by its realism — the other songs in the charts are real ones by real, well known people, and the sums of money involved all seem realistic. Part of the game's success lies in the involving options open to you as a rising star, as well as the pitfalls. Often, it is the limited number of options in these games that stifle the interest after a while, whereas I think* The Biz *will continue to fascinate for some time to come.'*

### COMMENTS

**Control keys:** largely Yes, No and ENTER with some general input
**Joystick:** N/A
**Keyboard play:** input routine is very fast and well error--trapped
**Use of colour:** screen display is clearly designed by using coloured letters and blocks
**Graphics:** text only
**Sound:** game only has some telephone beeps, cassette contains 8 singles
**General rating:** an unusually absorbing and addictive strategy/simulation with a sense of humour that represents good value.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 78% |
| **Graphics** | N/A |
| **Playability** | 86% |
| **Getting started** | 85% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 80% |
| **Value for money** | 83% |
| **Overall** | 83% |

# BLUE MAX

Producer: **US Gold**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Synsoft Software**




The 'Blue Max' was the highest award given by the Germans to brave fliers during the First World War. In this game you play Max Chatsworth (an Allied flier) whose nickname is 'Blue Max'. To earn your title you must make an assault on three specially marked targets within the city. The game starts by taking off from the runway, and continues as you fly low over the tree-lined terrain, past the river with its bridges, over tanks and anti-aircraft guns, and dodge the enemy biplanes as they try to shoot you down.

The screen display shows a bird's eye view of the ground which scrolls diagonally below your biplane. Controls allow you to alter altitude, fly left or right and fire with the forward facing machine gun or drop bombs on targets on the ground. The targets include buildings and bridges with flashing bullseyes, enemy planes, cars and ships. Entry to the next level of difficulty is achieved by bombing enough primary targets.

The biplane requires fuel and repairs if it is damaged, and this is accomplished by landing successfully on the runway. Below the playing screen is a command bar with information on altitude, fuel level, speed, bombs left and score. The bar also flashes colours to indicate when the plane is at strafing height, dangerously low, at a height to fire on an enemy plane, or if it has been hit. A letter code indicates the type of damage — fuel leak, bomb gear damaged, decreased manoeuvrability or machine gun damage.

Among the control options is one for having gravity effect on or off. When it is on,

the biplane sinks if the joystick is released.

## CRITICISM

● *'Blue Max* is, in a nutshell, a 'sort of' WW1 version of Zaxxon. The graphics are convincing and the game is playable. It is not over colourful, largely green, black and blue, but with all the ground details more colour would probably have caused attribute problems. Bombing requires perfect timing to hit the target, especially at higher altitudes. *Blue Max* is certainly a great game.'

● *'The scrolling 3D works quite well, height above the ground indicated by a shadow. This goes for the enemy aircraft as well, so skilful judgement of height is an important factor in success. I particularly liked the landing bit, which has to be judged accurately — land too late and there won't be enough runway left for the takeoff. The total playing area is not all that great (the runway cycles round in about one minute) but there is a lot of detail such as the trees and tanks, whose shells you can see firing and exploding. The graphics are generally very good, with reasonably smooth scrolling and some animated details like the revolving propellers of the biplanes. I found* Blue Max *an entertaining and reasonably addictive game which required some good reflexes and a sense of timing. Fun to play although US Gold's prices are sometimes a bit steep.'*

● 'I was interested to see what US Gold brought out this time for the Spectrum and also see the quality of the graphics, because their *Beach-Head* conversion was really excellent graphically. The graphics here are fairly small and not very action packed with the exception of an enemy aircraft that flies past now and again, although it doesn't go out of its way to destroy you — on level one anyhow! *Blue Max* does have a sort of 3D effect, although not totally convincing or effective. One thing that I did like about this game was the way the bombs dropped and made craters —



in fact so effectively do they make craters, that even the river begins to look like the surface of the moon. At least to start with (and I haven't got any further than level 1) the game isn't all that inspiring, but I must give it the benefit of the doubt and say that it will get progressively more difficult on further levels. I can't say I was totally taken up with this game.'




**Refuelling after a successful landing on the runway while overhead an enemy biplane passes.**

## COMMENTS

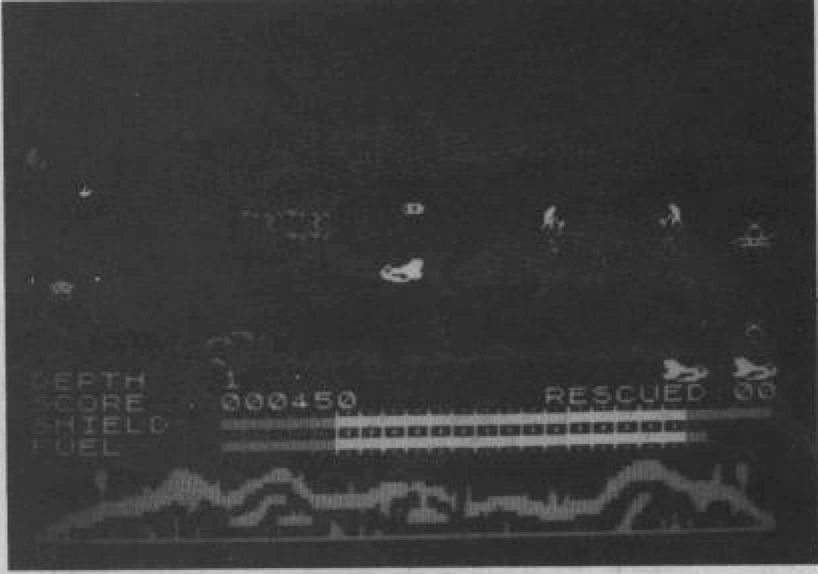
**Control keys:** user definable, four direction and one fire needed, bombs dropped by pressing fire and down
**Joystick:** Kempston, AGF, Protek, Sinclair 2
**Keyboard play:** responsive
**Use of colour:** a bit limited
**Graphics:** on the small side, but quite detailed although a little jerky on the scrolling
**Sound:** not much
**Skill levels:** progressive with achievement
**Lives:** 1
**Screens:** continuous scrolling
**General rating:** mixed feelings from reviewers ranging from great to okay-ish.




**Aiming for a barge on the river in BLUE MAX.**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 87% |
| **Graphics** | 84% |
| **Playability** | 77% |
| **Getting started** | 82% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 70% |
| **Value for money** | 68% |
| **Overall** | **78%** |

# SUBTERRANEAN STRYKER



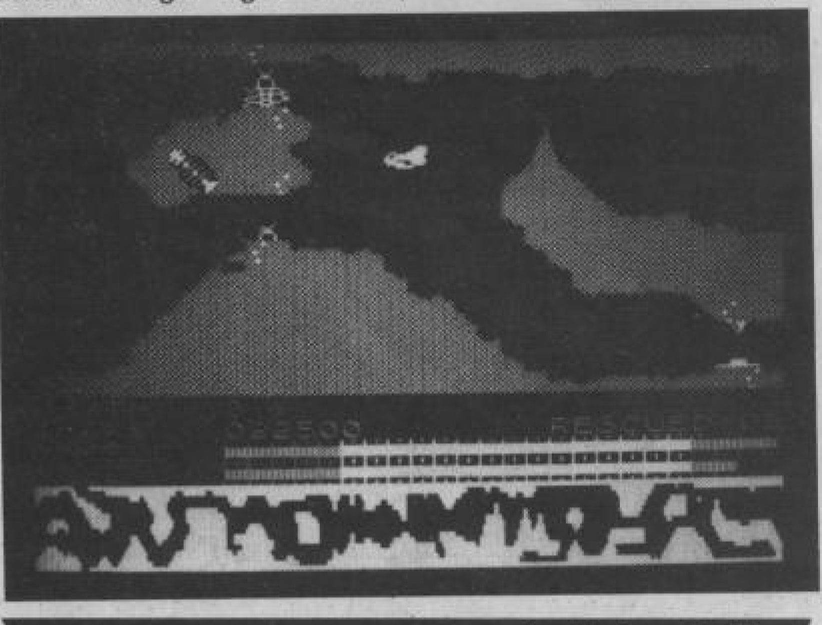

*The first level, showing the radar screen at the bottom and working miners waiting to be rescued.*

Producer: **Insight**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Mike Follin**

Putting new games in a convenient nutshell is always a rather dodgy process, although it does help describe them in a way. So, bearing in mind all the pitfalls of so doing, *Subterranean Stryker* could be described as a combination of a 'Defender' and a 'Scramble' with graphical overtones of a *Wheelie*. **Insight** is a new software house, and *Subterranean Stryker* their first game.

The overall object (apart from staying alive) is to descend through eight levels and destroy the enemy underground Power Crystal. The 'Defender' aspect is represented by the requirement to collect human miners from the various levels, in fact you have to collect all humans from a level before the gate to the next level will let you pass downwards. The 'Scramble' element is represented by the torturous caverns through which you travel, avoiding the various nasties, some of which shoot back at you. There is also a City level to compound the similarity. Having said that, *Subterranean Stryker* is not really a copy of either game.

The screen is split into three horizontal layers. At the top is the playing area. Each level contains five screens horizontally with continuous scrolling along them. Next comes a status panel with score, bar codes for shields and fuel level, numbers of humans rescued and lives left. Below is a radar scanner for the entire level which shows the positions of humans, nasties and your ship as well as exits to the next level down. Each level has its own colour, the rocks being drawn with alternating pixels of colour and black (which gives it its *Wheelie* look). Your ship is fitted with shields which can withstand bumps into the cavern walls and even allow you to pass through them if necessary, although this causes a heavy drain. Fuel may be replenished on some of the lower levels. All the humans and nasties are fully animated in a variety of ways.



*Your SUBTERRANEAN STRYKER descends to the lower levels.*

## CRITICISM

● 'I was quite impressed with the graphics of this game, to say the least, most of them are rather detailed and well animated. But the graphics seem to fall back when you start moving. Yes, they do scroll very quickly and in quite a smooth fashion, but for some reason they seem to merge into a blurr as you whizz past, so you constantly have to stop to be able to get your bearings again. Down into the depths of the caverns you go — these are also very detailed and colourful, *but* — here comes Catch 22 of this game — the caverns themselves are so constricting that it is impossible to fly at any speed through them without hitting the rocks and protrusions. This seems a little unfair to say the least, because you naturally lose shield strength as you progress through the game. Apart from this quibble, the game itself is very nicely finished with good sound. Animation is *Jet Set Willy* style — pretty good for a space-type game. It's a shame that this game is so difficult to play, or should I say 'tricky' to play, and does tend to kill itself off in playability and addictive qualities, due to the fact losing shields constantly is not only discouraging but frustrating.

● *'Having seen some screen pics of this game I thought that it would be a good sort of 'Defender' in the caves game, but besides the graphics and the sound, I didn't think the game was all that good. The animation of your ship isn't up to much because it is flickery. The game itself is alright for a while but you soon get that feeling that there isn't enough going on to keep you occupied and it is this that lets the game down.* Subterranean Stryker *is quite playable but you need a steady hand if you want to get anywhere with it. I'm sure some people will like this game but it is less suited to the zapper button happy alien exterminator or arcade†adventure mutants.*

● 'Although the graphics are fairly small in *Subterranean Stryker*, everything is very well drawn and busily animated. Touches like the spade digging earth and throwing over an imaginary shoulder are excellent. The playing area is also well defined, but it is here that the game begins to falter a little, as the caverns are so tightly constricting that to fly through them either at speed or without causing fatal shield damage is almost impossible. It's a pity really, because otherwise *Subterranean Stryker* would be a really great shoot and collect em up game with addictivity guaranteed because of the lovely graphics, and the need to see what the next of eight screens looks like.'

## COMMENTS

● **Control keys:** Q to T/A to G up/down, CAPS to V reverse, L to thrust, ENTER to fire
**Joystick:** Kempston, Sinclair 2, AGF, Protek
**Keyboard play:** responsive and very fine movement allowed
**Use of colour:** excellent and very varied
**Graphics:** very good, plenty of animation, bit flickery on your craft
**Sound:** good tune, nice spot effects
**Skill levels:** 1
**Lives:** 3 plus shields
**Screens:** 40 — eight levels with five scrolling screens each
**General rating:** a game of excellent promise that proves low on playability (and therefore addictivity) because of the difficulty level.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 82% |
| **Graphics** | 83% |
| **Playability** | 38% |
| **Getting started** | 79% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 40% |
| **Value for money** | 50% |
| **Overall** | 62% |

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| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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| V | T | Q | E | G | R | A | F | L | R | U | G | K | I | C | E | R | H | V | P |
| Q | E | A | R | D | L | O | E | E | Y | R | A | N | K | N | C | D | T | X | T |
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**TONG**
**KARATE**
**CARRADINE** *(what's he doing here? - ED)*
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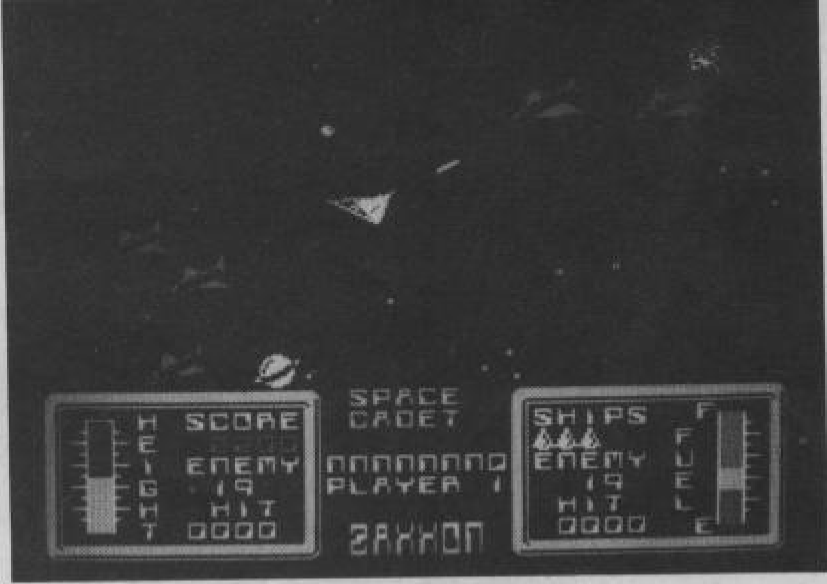
# ZAXXON

Producer: **US Gold**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**

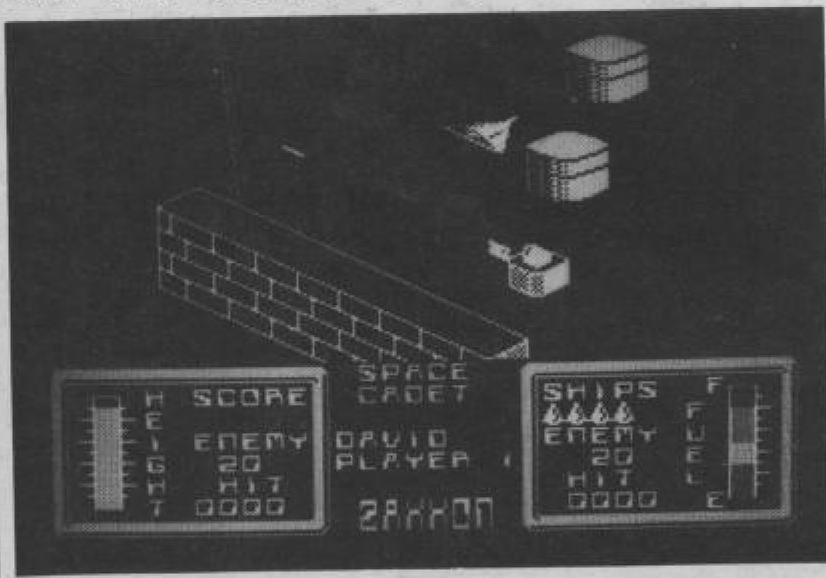
It's taken a long time to get *Zaxxon* (the real life official version) to the British Spectrum screens. But here it is. The game hardly needs much explanation, since the arcade original is probably the most famous of all arcade games, but briefly:

*Zaxxon* is a three-quarter scrolling space attack game in which you control an attack fighter as it sails above the surface of an alien enemy Asteroid City, a deep space fighter encounter and then another Asteroid City where you attempt to destroy the robot defence system ZAXXON. Destroying the robot takes you back for another go but with increased difficulty. Hazards include the walls which must be flown over, forcefields to shoot out or dodge, enemy fighters, gun emplacements, radar towers and launching missiles. Falling fuel is replenished by destroying the fuel dumps. The craft can move to the left and right as well as up and down. A classic tactic to judge the height of the approaching walls with their small gaps is to fire at them until you see your laser shots passing safely over, then you know you are high enough. height may also be judged by the relationship between your fighter and its shadow on the ground, although this obviously won't work in deep space.

US Gold released a version for the Commodore 64 some months earlier and there has been much speculation as to what the Spectrum version would look like.




Approaching a force field in ZAXXON.




The missing floor and back wall takes a lot of visual fun out of ZAXXON.

## CRITICISM

● 'ZAXXON the arcade game was *the* thing at one time. There has been the odd unofficial Spectrum version, but this is the 'real' one. Well it may be the official one but no way is it like the original. Basically it's a down-market version of the real game with a distinct lack of colour. The graphics are a bit on the jerky side, okay, but by today's standards not fantastic. *Lunar Jetman*, a scrolling game with complex graphics, achieved super-smoothness well over a year ago. *Zaxxon* itself is fairly playable but not really addictive. The scenario of shooting everything in sight is wearing thin. If manufacturers wish to distribute arcade originals then they must do so when the original is still new. Overall, I was disappointed with *Zaxxon* and I have come to the conclusion that official versions are not necessarily as good as the originals. In terms of this game *Zaxxon* is probably the best about, but does leave a little to be desired.'

● *'US Gold have been advertising* Zaxxon *for months now and then one day it just appeared out of the blue, and to tell the truth, I wish it hadn't. The graphics, while adequate, are jerky, colour is used scarcely and sound is barely used at all. The game is quite playable but it doesn't capture the excitement of the arcade — or, dare I say it — the Commodore version. If you still want a good ZAXXON then this isn't it. Official or not, it isn't much better in my opinion than the Starzone one.'*

● 'ZAXXON must be called the arcade success story, a game which inspired many other 3D games. The success was mainly brought about by its superb 45 degree 'above' angle view of the very colourful and wonderfully detailed graphics. It must be said that obviously the graphics cannot be faithfully reproduced on a computer such as the Spectrum, nor the gaming element of the original. So far there have been about three unsuccessful attempts on reproducing ZAXXON (*Zaxxan* by Starzone, *Havoc* by Dynavision and now *Zaxxon* by US Gold). The US Gold version is definitely the best effort. The graphics that make this type of game and play a major role have failed to produce any atmosphere whatsoever. They are slow, jerky, unattractive and untrue to the original in the sense that there is no back wall or floor. Everything seems to hang in empty blackness. The 3D effect works fairly well if you get low down and try (and I do say *try*) to weave in and out of the objects; but problems are met again — the dreaded attribute problems. They can get so bad that it becomes a matter of luck whether you hit anything. I would go as far as to say that the programmer has got his sprite priorities wrong, that is to say that ground obstacles should not overwrite that of your craft. Another point that should be mentioned is your fighter's shadow — yes it is there, but whatever happened to the 3D 'hidden view' theory? As you pass over a wall you can still see your shadow *through* the solid wall as well as the other objects. Confusing. Moving onto the Space sequence, the 3D effect (which did work in the original) fails to do so here — it is just a matter of luck and chance if you hit an enemy fighter and the screen becomes very cluttered up with more than four fighters flying about. About the only thing I can commend on the graphics side are the explosions, yours or theirs — pretty effective whichever way. Moving onto the 'nerve-rattling sound effects' my Spectrum, I think, has lost its tongue — constant clickings is about all you get — very rattling. Finally, perhaps most importantly, the control response is so sluggish that you are forced to think miles ahead to be able to shoot anything. It's this that finally knocks on the head any playability or addictiveness.'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys:** user definable, preset are I/P left/right, Q/Z dive/climb and N to fire. Our copies failed to allow the user-definable function to be selected, nor the instructions
**Joystick:** Sinclair 2, Kempston, AGF, Protek
**Keyboard play:** not really a keyboard game; key response is sluggish
**Use of colour:** colours tend to be bright but sparse and obvious
**Graphics:** slow and jerky, not much detail
**Sound:** very poor
**Skill levels:** 3
**Lives:** 3
**Screens:** continuously scrolling with three sections
**General rating:** a grave disappointment.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 60% |
| **Graphics** | 70% |
| **Playability** | 64% |
| **Getting started** | 54% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 52% |
| **Value for money** | 49% |
| **Overall** | **58%** |



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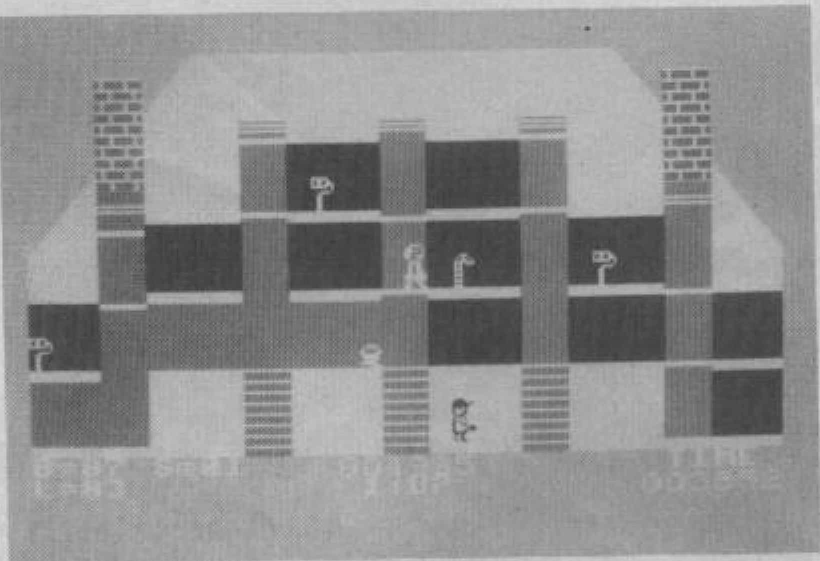
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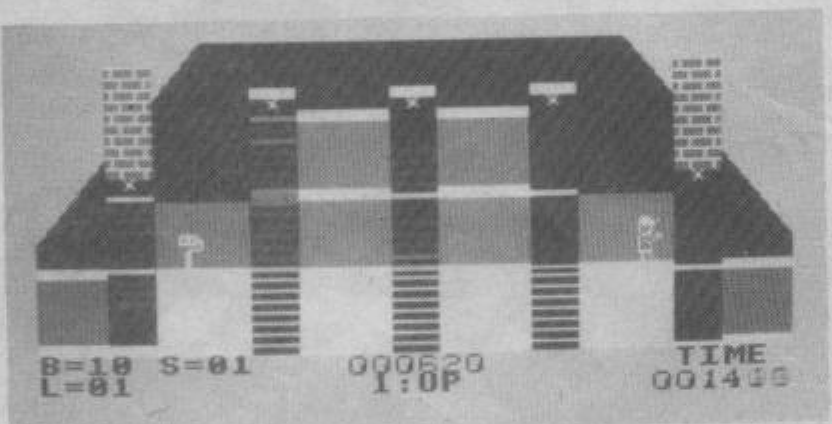


Rooms with paint rollers should be the first to visit for a bonus.

# BRISTLES

Producer: Statesoft
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: £7.95
Language: **machine code**
Author: **R Huddy**




One of the easier houses awaiting expert redecoration in BRISTLES.

*Bristles* is not a hard game to describe exactly, but it is somewhat hard to describe in detail, as there are rather a lot of ingredients. Basically, what we have here is a 1985 'Painter' type game. It is set in a house, or series of houses, and each room must be painted before the time runs out. With each screen the set up gets more complicated. There is a basement with ladders leading up to the ground floor and from then on there are lifts to the other floors. These zip up and down at a furious pace and timing is required to enter and exit them safely. Traversing a room will result in its being painted. The houses can have as many as five lifts.

Inevitably, these buildings are filled with awkward nasties which are described in the commendably detailed instruction booklet. Some of these chase you ferociously, others follow predictable patterns; some of them knock you down to the basement to start over, while others rob you of points by taking paint away. Some rooms have paint rollers in them and these rooms should be done first. If you run out of paint and there is a roller left, get it, because it effectively gives you more paint. Each screen is controlled by a timer — when it runs out your points are calculated and you may progress to the next screen if sufficient points are obtained.

There are 48 skill levels consisting of six levels with eight houses in each. The differences between the skill levels is also complicated but well detailed in the booklet. Between levels a series of letters appears on screen which will result in a message after completing eight houses. Discovering all six messages is the ultimate challenge in the game.

## CRITICISM

● 'At first I was tempted to say, not another 'Painter' game, so long after the genre has had its day, but *Bristles* is rather a lot more than that. It turns out to be a game of furious speed, quick thinking and strategy. What gives the game its real quality is the inter-relation of the various skill levels. Each one presents a different strategy challenge, like painting a house without the lights on! Another novel — though no longer unique — feature, is the option for playing as a male or female painter, although this doesn't actually add anything to the game. *Bristles* is an original idea based on an old theme, and I found it addictive. But I think the £8 price tag is unfortunately too steep.'

● *'I thought the 'Painter' theme had died out months and months ago, but here it has been revived again by Statesoft. The idea is a considerable advancement on the original 'Painter' idea and requires much more skill. The graphics are nothing extra-special, but are adequate enough for you to enjoy the game. This must be among the most simple of games that I have ever played that yet still has highly addictive qualities. The sound tends to drive you up the wall after a while, as you frantically try to paint the house and get chased by the various creatures that roam the houses. The biggest drawback to this game is the price. It is extremely expensive for the type of game and only valid if something like seven months of programming have gone into it, and in all honesty no one can say that much has gone into it. It is a great pity as it would surely have sold really well at a lower price range, but at this price I cannot recommend it.'*

● *'Bristles* is one of those old 'Painter' type games but it's been altered in such a way that the game is very frantic and quite addictive to play. the graphics are reasonable but not out of this world, and as in most 'Painter' games, colour is used well. The sound isn't so good, however, just a continuous buzzing, although it does add to the game by making it even more frantic. I found *Bristles* very addictive and playable, if a bit costly. Overall, a nice, simple game which is enormous fun to play.'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys:** Q or ENTER/A or SPACE up/down, SYM SHIFT or CAPS/SPACE or Z left/right, or the cursor keys
**Joystick:** AGF, Protek, Kempston, Sinclair ! & 2
**Keyboard play:** responsive and thoughtfully laid out for left or right handers and cursor freaks
**Use of colour:** good
**Graphics:** on the small side and simply drawn/animated, but fast and smooth
**Sound:** good between-play tune, otherwise a continuous buzzing with no on/off facility
**Skill levels:** 48
**Lives:** 1
**Screens:** eight houses
**General rating:** an addictive, clever game of strategy and arcade skill, but over priced.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 84% |
| **Graphics** | 70% |
| **Playability** | 82% |
| **Getting started** | 85% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 83% |
| **Value for money** | 45% |
| **Overall** | **75%** |

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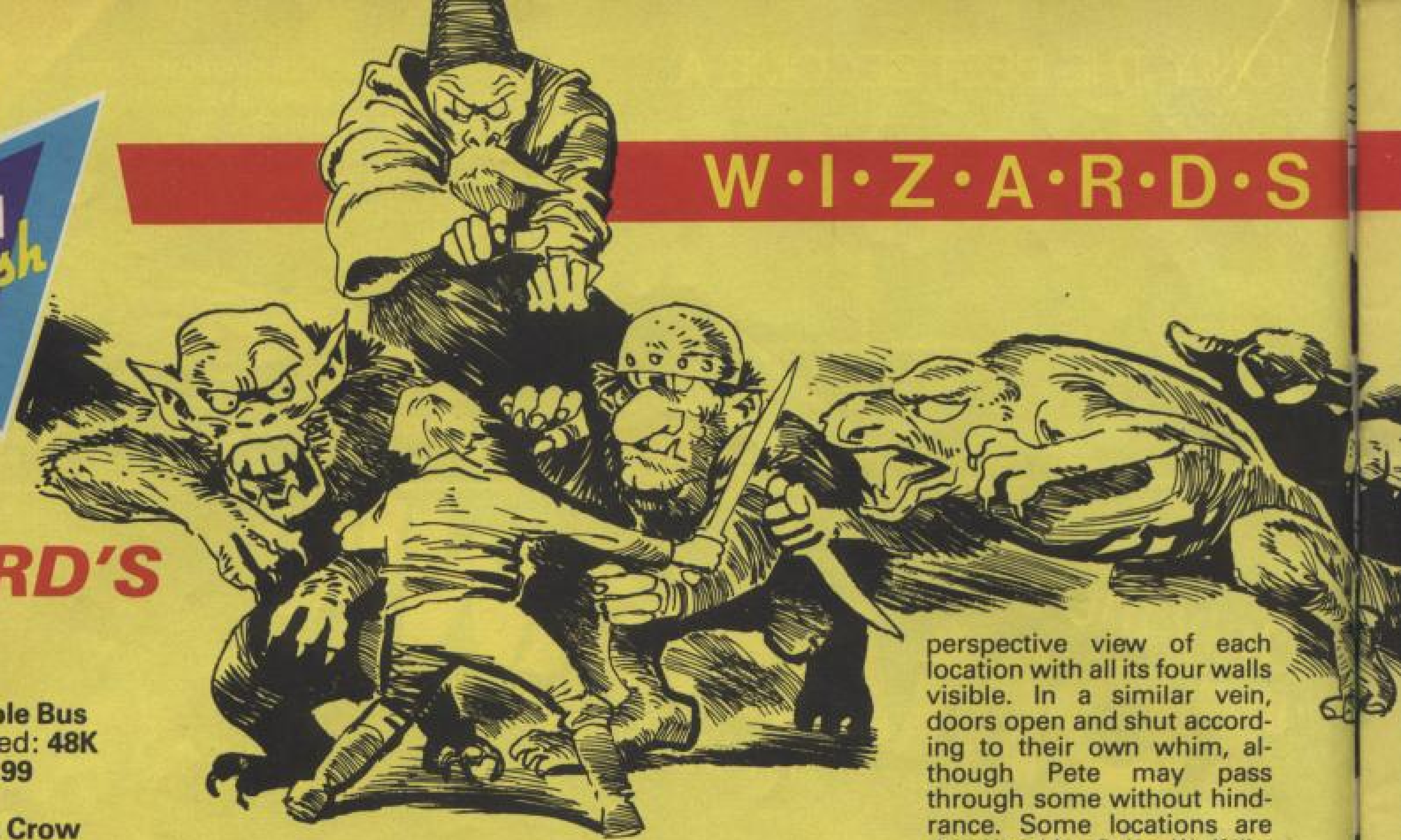
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A CRASH Smash

W·I·Z·A·R·D·S



# WIZARD'S LAIR

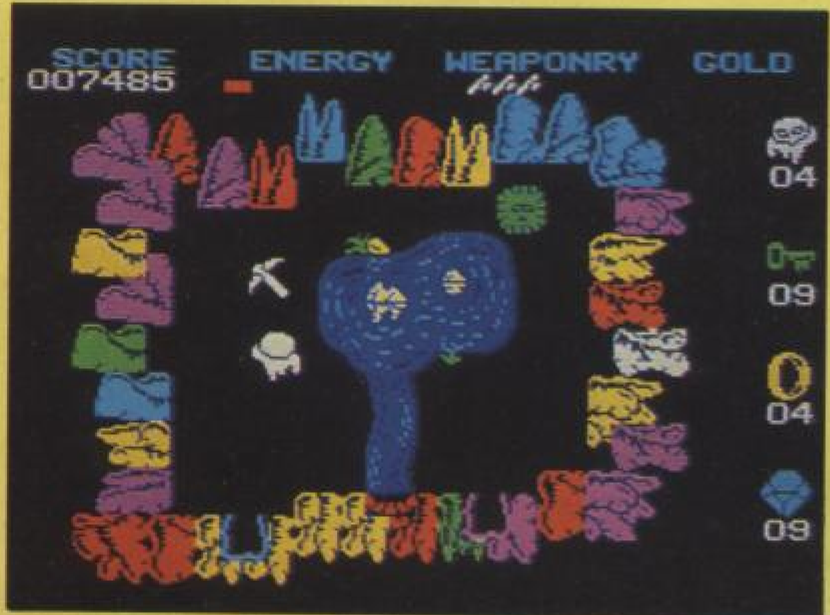
Producer: **Bubble Bus**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.99**
Language: **48K**
Author: **Steven Crow**

The author of this game may sound familiar to CRASH readers because he also wrote a previous CRASH SMASH, Poppysoft's *Factory Breakout*. This new game is nothing like the previous one — what it is inescapably like, however, is *Atic Atac* and graphically at times like *Sabre Wulf*. So similar is the basic theme and graphic appearance, that accusations of copying are bound to fly, but there's nothing wrong with taking a good idea and developing it, if the result is as good or better — and it remains to be seen what readers think of this.

*Wizard's lair* is an arcade adventure with 256 locations on seven levels which are interconnected by trapdoors and lifts. The story involves Pot Hole Pete who, while on a subterranean ramble, stumbles across the Wizard's Lair, a place inhabited by numerous and various monsters of appalling speed and determination to kill. The overall object is to collect all the pieces of the Golden Lion. The screen view is that of *Atic Atac*, ie an overhead perspective view of each location with all its four walls visible. In a similar vein, doors open and shut according to their own whim, although Pete may pass through some without hindrance. Some locations are described by *Sabre Wulf*-like vegetation, while others are drawn as caverns.

Game features include the collection of food for energy, weapons, gold, gems, keys and the bits of the Golden Lion. Now and again Pete comes across a spell scroll, but the spell can only be used if he possess enough gold. The spell allows you to gain either more weapons,

more energy, convert to gems, have more keys or magic rings. Each of the objects serves a function, and one of the game objectives is to discover what everything does. Across the top of the screen there is a score line and bar codes for energy, weapons and gold, while down the right side legends tell you how many lives you have left, and how many keys, rings and gems you have collected. Scoring is done as a percentage of the adventure completed, time taken, objects collected and, of course, pieces of the Golden Lion found



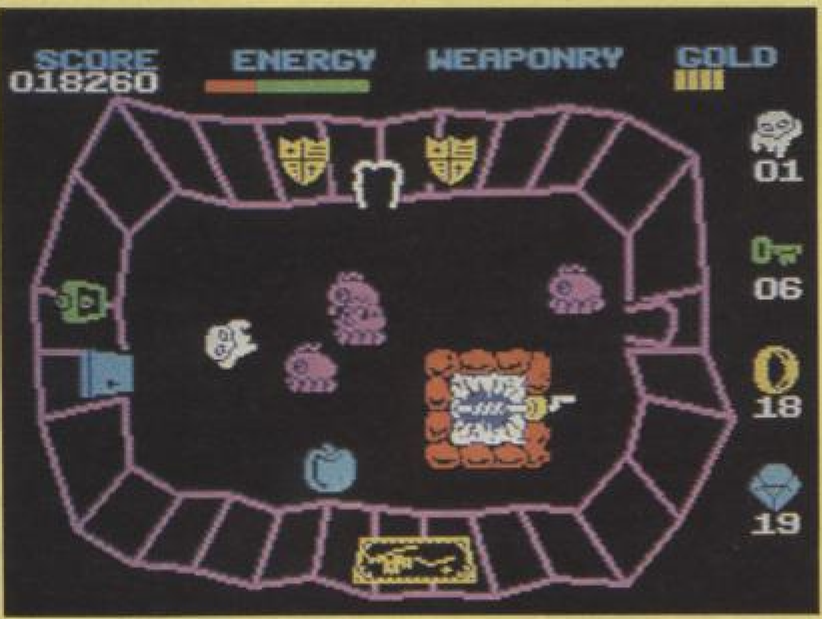
A lower level of the caverns with stream and lake

## CRITICISM

● 'There is no doubt that this an *Atic Atac*-like game, but saying that, it is distinctly different in many ways. The graphics seem to me to be somewhat better than those in the Ultimate game, they are much more varied, colourful and characteristic. Each of your enemies has its own character which allows you to build up tactics against them to defeat them. I like the way you can run out of weapons as well as energy and have to search for them as well as the Golden Lion. The game seemed to me to be a much faster playing game than *Atic Atac* with much more going on and gets very frantic at times. There are many doors for which you must have keys, while others are opened on touch. the main reason why I enjoyed it, is that there is so much activity going on all the while. Overall, a really professionally put together game that could be called an up-date on *Atic Atac* with more locations, more to do, with smashing graphics — a brilliant piece of programming — a winner. Buy it!'

● *'Yes, this is definitely like* Atic Atac, *but it is also different. It's actually much faster for one thing, and there are other differences. Monsters often appear by coming through the doors and taking you by surprise. Your character is not drawn from the side but in overhead perspective too. He can run out of weaponry, which is alarming! The addition of spells enabling you to convert your gold to other things is a useful addition. There are many more locations and some of these have rivers running through them which turns the greater maze into a smaller, dissected one as well. The locations held in memory appear as fast as those in* Atic Atac, *but the line drawn caverns are redrawn each time. This is done very fast, and if it looks a bit more ragged than in the Ultimate game, it does, how-*

# W·I·Z·A·R·D·S L·A·I·R




One of the levels with line graphic 3D rooms

*ever, give you a valuable second's breathing space — it also allows for the extra locations. In all, the graphics are of an excellent standard, extremely fast and flicker-free, imaginative and well drawn as well as colourful. Sound, too, is excellent with a good synthesised sounding tune and loads of noisy spot effects.* Wizard's Lair *is bound to keep players at it for ages, just surviving as well as mapping! I enjoyed it immensely.'*

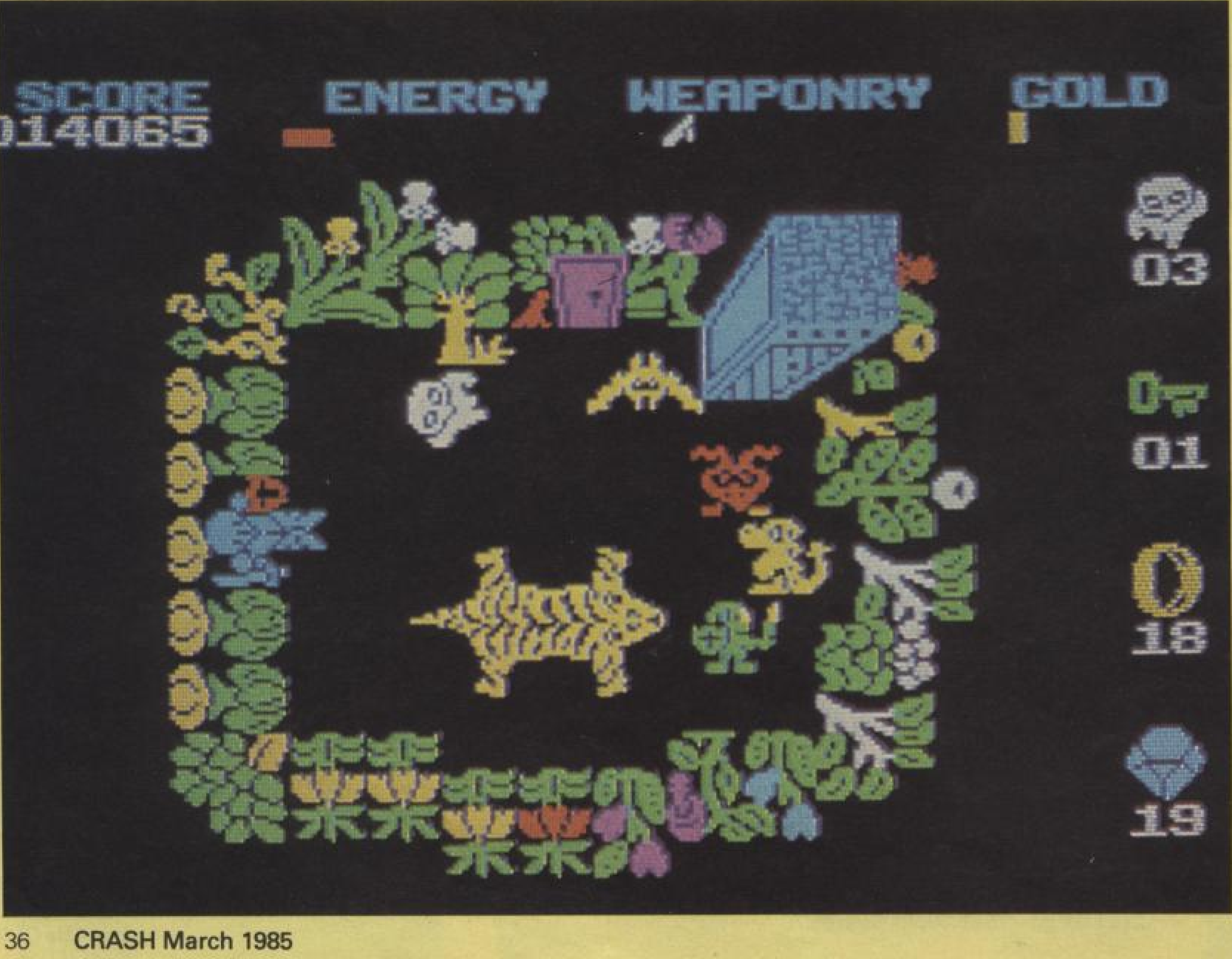
● *'Wizard's Lair* has an unusual fast loader, which makes the border flash in wide bands rather like some of the recent Commodore 64 loaders. It also draws the title page very quickly. There is a super key and joystick option menu, and the user definable key menu uses a large graphic of the Spectrum, colouring selected keys in red when you press them. This quality of design goes on into the high-energy game with its Ultimate-standard graphics and sound. It is, of course, very similar to *Atic Atac* but does not suffer by the comparison at all in my opinion. There are still many things to discover — I don't know what happens when you turn purple yet! It's fast, playable and highly addictive and I'm sure Bubble Bus, who have done almost nothing before for the Spectrum, must be very pleased with it. I know I am.'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys: 3 options are selectable being: O/P,Q/A,M or QWERT or 67890, and if you prefer, you can define the keys yourself**
**Joystick:** Kempston, Protek, AGF, Sinclair 2
**Keyboard play:** very responsive, nice to have so many selections
**Use of colour:** excellent
**Graphics:** excellent, fast and ultra-smooth
**Sound:** excellent
**Skill levels:** 1
**Lives:** 5
**Screens:** 256
**General rating:** an excellent arcade/adventure game which requires exploration and discovery. Very good value for money and highly recommended

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 98% |
| **Graphics** | 94% |
| **Playability** | 94% |
| **Getting started** | 95% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 94% |
| **Value for money** | 90% |
| **Overall** | **94%** |

A mix of jungle and room - a lift stands in the top right corner



# A wealth of Peripherals for your Spectrum!

By RICK BRAVO

Since the 48K Spectrum was launched the opportunities it offered has attracted peripheral manufacturers throughout the world.

One of these manufacturers was bound to emerge as the "brand leader" and in the case of the Spectrum this turned out to be DK'tronics. The company is based in Saffron Walden in Essex and proudly boasts a history dating back to the ZX80. All the company's products are manufactured in England at their own factory and they have now established themselves as world leaders, exporting to over 30 countries.

Below you will find a review of their range which now includes over 16 products, all of which are available for the Spectrum and Spectrum + models.

## Keyboard

The DK Microdrive Compatible Keyboard is the best selling keyboard in the world and is now used by around 10% of all U.K. Spectrum owners. It is microdrive compatible and offers more key functions than any other keyboard in its price range. The stepped keys and space bar make it even easier to use. It is constructed from high density black ABS and has 52 keys and a full width space bar. A separate numeric keypad of 12 red keys including single entry 'delete' plus single entry 'decimal point' facilitate fast numeric data entry.

From good computer shops everywhere at only £37.50 or direct from DK'tronics, add £1.50 post & packing.




## Dual Port




The first port simulates 6,7,8,9, & 0 Keys. The second port simulates in (31) command.

The port will accept any Atari style joystick.

It will run any software. That is:-

(a) Using Keys 6,7,8,9 & 0.
(b) Having redefinable key instructions.
(c) Using in (31) (i.e. Kempston).

This Dual Port interface interconnects with the existing range of DK'tronics products to form the most comprehensive range of Spectrum peripherals available from any manufacturer.

From good computer shops everywhere at only £13.00 or direct from DK'tronics, add £1.50 post & packing.

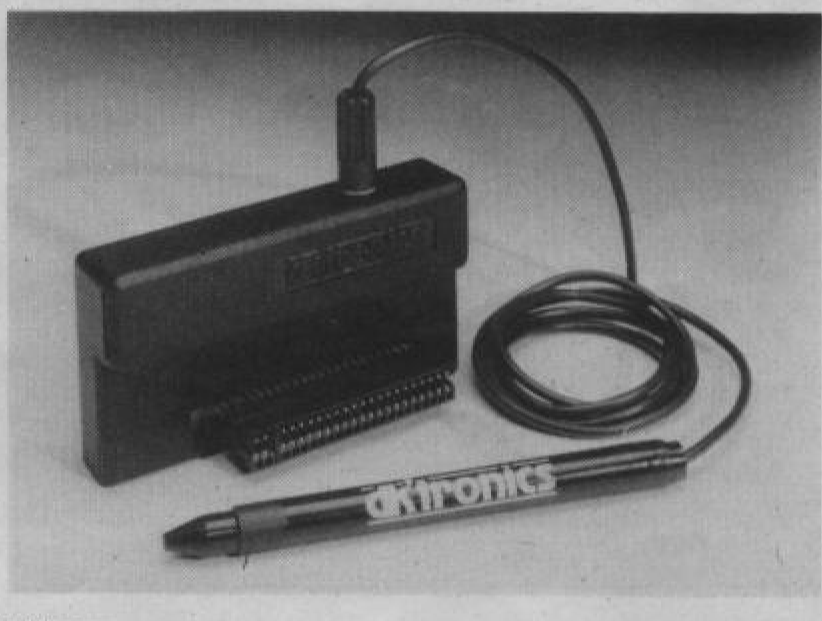
## Light Pen

This highly successful Light Pen for the Sinclair Spectrum plugs neatly onto the rear of the Computer or the rear of the printer connector. The operating software now runs faster and supports 16 pre-defined instructions. You can change all the colours (Border, Paper, Ink), draw circles, arcs, boxes, lines and insert text onto the screen (ideal for diagrams etc.) Save & load completed or partly completed screens onto or from the tape.

There are also features to draw Free Hand and animate on the 48K Spectrum, you can retain and animate 5 screens.

You can also use the machine code on its own in your own programs for selecting out of a menu, playing games etc. All entry points necessary are given. The Pen works down to pixel level with pixel accuracy.

From good computer shops everywhere at only £19.95 or direct from DK'tronics, add £1.50 post & packing.



From dk'tronics® Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 3AQ tel:(0799) 26350

## 3 Channel Sound Synthesizer

Any microcomputer is capable of manufacturing sound, however, in order to produce a single octave 'C' note with a frequency of 8372Hz the signal needs attention over 16,000 times per second.

To produce software capable of perfoming just this one task would be difficult if not impossible, especially when you consider that to produce arcade type sound effects requires even greater attention.

The production of these sound effects without the constant attention of the processor is now possible thanks to the AY Sound Chip, its flexibility makes it essential for a wide range of applications including music synthesis and sound effects generation, continuing the monitoring and production of sound after the initial command.

More often than not realistic sounds require more than one effect and this function is provided by 3 independently controlled channels, as an example compare the sound produced by the single note of 'C' with that produced by the chord 'C' and you will know just what I mean, likewise producing the sound of an explosion using all 3 channels gives games a totally new dimension.

Add to this the ability to alter the pitch tone and shape of the sound you have produced and it's flexibility is unlimited. In simple terms, imagine the note you have produced as a calm sea, by altering the pitch and shape you can produce waves, the top of the wave corresponds with the maximum volume and pitch of the note, which like the wave itself rises and falls.

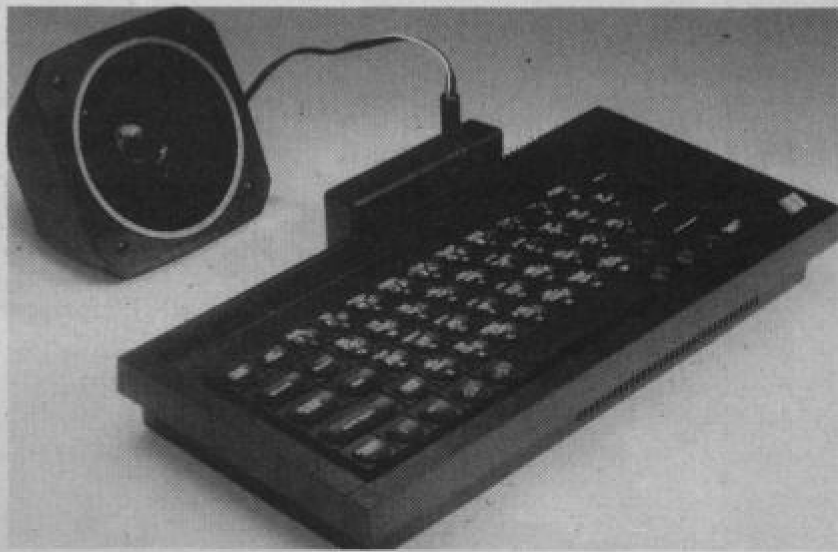
## Programmable



At last! A fully programmable joystick interface with feed through connector that really works!

Now you can run ANY software from ANY supplier with the DK'tronics fully programmable joystick interface. It comes complete with machine code software and can be programmed in seconds to give full 8 directional joystick movements plus five capabilities and will accept any Atari/Quickshot type joystick. A catalogue is now available showing the full range of products available from DK'tronics the world's leading Spectrum peripheral manufacturer. The through connector enables other add-ons to be plugged into the rear.

From good computer shops everywhere at only £22.95 or direct from DK'tronics, add £1.50 post & packing.



## Speech Synthesizer

The speech synthesizer uses the popular SL0/256 speech chip and has an almost infinite vocabulary. It is supplied with a text to speech converter for ease of speech output creation. Everything you wish to be spoken is entered in normal English, without special control codes or characters, it is therefore extremely easy to use. The voicing of the words is completely user transparent and the computer can carry on its normal running of a program while the speech chip is talking.

Although there are only 26 letters in the alphabet, letters have a totally different sound when used in different words. For example, the "a" in Hay is much longer and softer than in Hat. When you speak you automatically make adjustments because you know just how a word should sound. Not quite so easy with a computer. After looking at other speech synthesizers we decided that it was essential that the DK'tronics Spectrum Speech would offer a simple system that would enable the user to produce realistic speech that was instantly recognisable.

The solution to the problem was extremely complicated, it required hours of programming to enable the computer to look at the individual letters that make up each word and compare their relative position to each other before deciding on the appropriate sound.

I consider this to be the best Spectrum Speech Synthesizer on the market. From good computer shops everywhere at only £24.95 or direct from DK'tronics, add £1.50 post & packing.

## Centronics

The new Dk'tronics Parallel Centronics Interface will link your Spectrum to any printer with a standard centronics input. As the choice is vast, you can select the printer exactly suited to your needs.

Features of the interface include: Runs all parrallel centronics type printers: Controlling software fully relocatable; Interfaces with any software using the printer channel e.g. Tasword Dev Pack etc; LList Lprint recognised. High res screen dumps; All control codes allowed through to printer; Fully microdrive compatible.

Supplied with full instructions and controlling software. From good computer shops everywhere and sensibly priced at only £39.95 or direct from DK'tronics, add £1.50 post & packing.

# THE MONTHLY CRASH QUIZ

This month's quiz is something a little out of the ordinary. What we want you to do is write a photo caption for the picture of **Sir Clive Sinclair** and **Harold MacMillan** (AKA Lord Stockton) of not more than 25 words. To give you a helping hand, the massed brains of the CRASH offices have already come up with three examples, but we're all sure you can do better! Write your entry down on a postacard and send it in to **CRASH QUIZ, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB** to arrive no later than last post on **MARCH 28.** The three best entries will win £25 worth of software and CRASH T-shirt, and the three runners-up will each receive a T-shirt. The Editor's decision is final in judging the entries.



Example 1: **'. . . and that's Horace killing Chris Curry, Your Lordship.'**

Example 2: **'Lord, you played the Knight too long.'**

Example 3: **'You'll find the C5 accelerator is key 7 Harold.'**

## *WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS*

### *BEACH-HEAD WINNERS*

***KA Fletcher, Brierly Hill, W. Midlands; Philip Smith, Hyde Cheshire; RD Wright, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs; Richard braley, Ormskirk, Lancs; A Warrington, Handsacre, Nr Rugeley, Staffs; Kevin Earley, East Croyden, Surrey; Marie McNally, Caversham, Reading, Berks; AD Powis, Maesteg, Mid Glamorgan; Roger Whittaker, Stonegate, Leicester; E. Gilham, Fulham, London; David Brown, Emmer Green, Reading, Berks; David Blunden, Sheffield; Robert Smith, Kingsley, Nr Frodsham, Cheshire; John Dickson, Gullane, E. Lothian; Tim Nottingham, Brundall, Norfolk; Simon Wilson, Crowle, Worcs; T Forster, Leeds, W. Yorks; Glenn Cooper, Epsom, Surrey; TS Donelly, Bedford; Colin May, Ditton, Maidstone, Kent; A Doncaster, Danesmoor, Nr Chesterfield, Derbys; James paul, Whitburn, W. Lothian; David Vallery, Balerno, Edinburgh; Glenn McDonnell, Hoddesdon, Herts; Philip Cooper, Little Oakley, Harwich, Essex; SP Duckworth, Cale Green, Stockport, Cheshire; John Camp, Whetstone, London; AJ Markham, Hopton-on-Sea, Grt Yarmouth, Norfolk; H Forrester, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham; Tracy Bashford, Battersea, London; Don Ramsay, Undercliffe, Bradford, W. Yorks; Lee Chapman, Aylesbury, Bucks; Keith Mawson, Slough, Berks; Darran Gardner, Pollokshields, Glasgow; Lee Smith, Hatfield, Herts; Nigel Richardson, Sutton, Surrey; Jamie Samath, Swindon, Wilts; R Lockley, HQ J.S.L.O. BFPO 19; Robert Hardy, Chingford, London; George Cochrane, Carnoustie, Angus; Michael Penhallurick, Filton, Bristol; Richard Burrell, Dereham, Norfolk; T Hammonds, Barnsley, S. Yorks; Sam Warwick, Newbury, Berks; Julian Badell, Oaklands, Welwyn, Herts; J Hughes, Haddington, East Lothian; Adam Hooper, Hauxton, Cambs; Chris Pleass, Timsbury, Bath; Jon Sendel, Jordanthorpe, Sheffield; Kevin Silverston, Bigby-on-Sea, S. Devon.***

### *WINNERS RUNES OF ZENDOS*

**Winner** (Microdrive, £10 and game) Mark Perkins, High Wycombe, Bucks
Runners up **(£10 and game) EW Sykes, Marlborough, Wilts; Alan Johnston, Knightswood, Glasgow; Graeme Johnston, Ascot, Berks; TJ Ferrell, Sidcup, Kent.**
**The Rest (game)** George Cochrane, Carnoustie, Angus; Robert Finlayson, Parkhouse Estate, Glasgow; SJ Galloway, Grantham, Lincs; John Olphin, Worthing, W. Sussex; Bruce Hall, Edinburgh; Mark Webster, Norris Green, Liverpool; TP Hardman, Warrington, Cheshire; Jason Goddard, Solihull, W. Midlands; Susan Jolley, Warrington, Cheshire; Robert Slater, Rugeley, Staffs; David Ainsworth, Poulton-le-Fylde, Blackpool, Lancs; James Goldie, Glasgow; Andrew Kay, Baildon Shiplex, Bradford, W. Yorks; Paul Watts, Ilfracombe, Devon; Stephen Temple, Garston, Watford, Herts; Marie McNally, Reading, Berks; Keith Mawson, Stoke Poges, Berks; Steve Friel, Highams Park, London; J. Sutcliffe, Winchester, Hants; J. Gregory, Halesowen, W. Midlands; JT Stockdale, Beauchief, Scotland; AE Storer, Warmley, Bristol; Stephen Marriott, New Duston, Northants; Matthew Care, Bestwood Park Estate, Nottingham; Jonathon Metcalfe, Orpington, Kent; Paul Wilkinson, Harlington, Middx; Graham Creasey, Ashford, Kent; M. Rudge, Ipswich, Suffolk; H Owen, Bedhampton, Hants; Brian Gillespie, Old Kilpartick, Dunbartonshire; Matthew Walker, Farnley, Leeds; CA Woodford, Sandown, IOW; Richard Beard, Harrogate, Yorks; G Duncan, Dunfermline, Scotland; R Burgess, Rotherham, S. Yorks; Neil Vardon, Rothley, Leicester; James Collins, Croydon, Surrey; Donald McNeil, Kirkcaldy, Fife; David Horn, Hornsea, N. Humberside; SG Grudgington, Portsmouth, Hants; Simon Poluck, Redbrige, Ilford, Essex; Malcolm Dixon, Cheshunt, Herts; Lewis Cohen, Whittlesey, Peterborough; E Fairless, Killingworth, Necastle-on-Tyne; Nigel, Carlton, Nottingham.

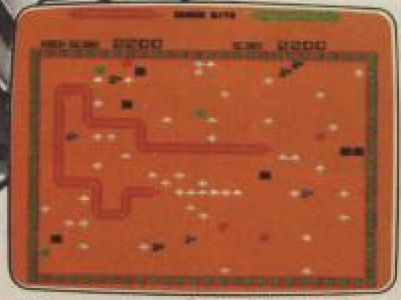
### *RESULTS OF THE DECEMBER CRASH QUIZ*

**Winners**: JA Morrison, Elswick, Newcastle-u-Tyne; Robert Chapman, Watford, Herts; AL Watkins, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex.

### *SINCLAIR COMPETITION (December issue)*

G Walker of Little Hampton, W. Sussex, won the Spectrum plus computer.

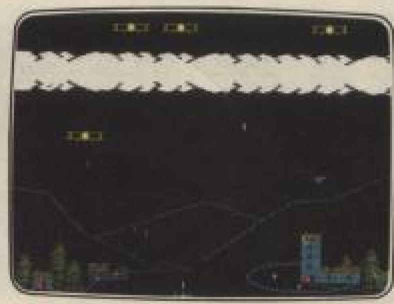
# SILVER RANGE Seeing



001 Arcade VIC 20 (UNEXPANDED)
**SNAKE BITE** – Simply the slitheriest game of its kind.



002 Arcade VIC 20 (UNEXPANDED)
**MICKEY THE BRICKY** – Four screens packed with fun.



003 Arcade BBC MICRO B
**BIRD STRIKE** – Wing the planes and shoot the pigeons.



004 Arcade BBC MICRO B
**GOLD DIGGER** – The hazards of digging for gold down under.



005 Arcade BBC MICRO B
**DUCK!** – Comedy and music in this duck shoot.



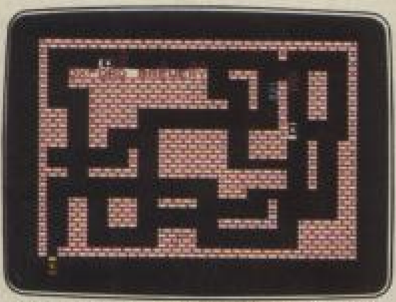
013 Arcade BBC MICRO B
**ACID DROPS** – Fly through to tackle the mutant spinners.



022 Arcade BBC MICRO B
**ESTRA** – Recover the sacred statue of Estra the snake god.



023 Arcade/Strategy BBC MICRO B
**THE HACKER** – Terminal to modem, telephone network to mainframe.



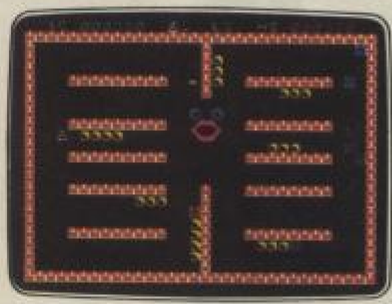
006 Arcade SPECTRUM 16K/48K
**RUN BABY RUN** – Multi-car cop chase and shoot-out.



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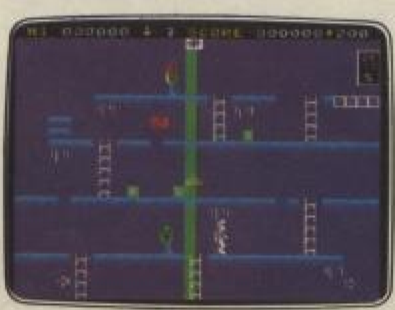
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**MENACE** – What happens when teacher turns his back.



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## PROJECT FUTURE

Producer: **Micromania**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Dominic Wood**

Your mission is to teleport aboard and activate the Self Destruct System of the dreaded SS Future, a huge labyrinth of a space ship covering 256 screens. The trouble with the SS Future is that it is hurtling uncontrollably towards the earth on a collision course. You play Space Cadet Farley, a neat looking sprite of the future, and you must collect all the destruct codes that are hidden in the ship.

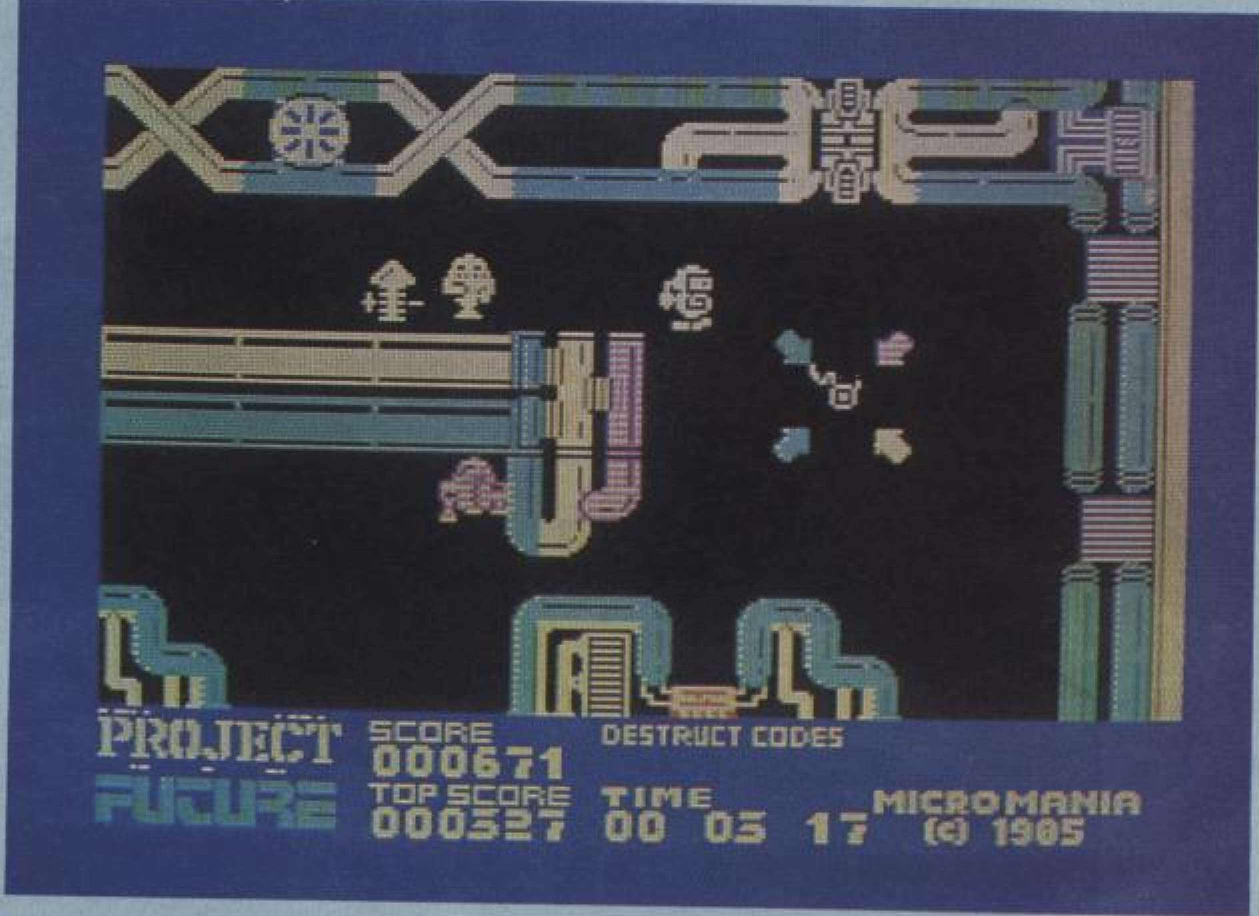
The SS Future consists of five decks of increasingly complex, interlocked mazes and is filled with numerous defence droids who's prime task is to prevent you from living too long. To help you the Space College have equipped you with a powerful laser and occasionally you might discover an armour-plated suit into which you can dive and which protects you from the effects of the droids for four screens. The various decks are reached via a teleport system, and depending on which direction you enter the device, you will be transported to another level. There is also a scooter which looks a bit like a C5.2, and speeds up movement around the decks, though you still have to watch out for the nasties when using it. It too lasts for only four screens. The destruct codes are blocks which are collected by running over them. Once all the codes are collected it's time to find the destruct button and save Earth yet again.

### CRITICISM

● 'Before giving my opinion on the game I would like to say that on the inlay there is no reason given for destroying the ship; is one needed? *(Note: the Earth collision is mentioned in the separate PR —Ed). Project Future* is a large maze game, a sort of *Sabre Wulf* in space. I say this both of style and quality. The game has several features such as protective suits, space scooters etc. The game has good graphics and is full of colour. It's addictive because you can soon obtain a destruct code, but collecting the lot takes quite a while (not yet achieved by the way)! After each game I wanted to ,play more and the inter-game pause became annoying. Another frustration was that 'up' and 'down' on the Kempston were reversed. The maze scenario may not be highly original but if it is done well then it should receive credit. In fact the maze from ancient days has been a subject of fascination and innovation. So long may it live.'

● *'Maze games don't seem to be so common now as they used to be. A wider approach to the maze idea has been given to this game in that each screen is very detailed and has its own playing area designated to it. The thought of wandering around a huge, viciously inhabited space ship to collect eight destruct codes is quite daunting. I found it was very easy to get lost in* Project Future, *so a map seems essential. The graphics are well animated and 'alien'-like, and of a nice size. There's some indefinable quality about this game that makes you want to play on and on — perhaps this is what many games lack these days. Playability is an essential ingredient of maze-type games, otherwise you quickly lose interest. I like the way you can pick up an extra man, not just by scoring a certain amount, but the extra men are dotted about waiting for you to find them — and you certainly need them. There are a number of features to discover, like the alcoves you can duck into to avoid the nasties. Sound is very good indeed, well used and not over-used. A good idea, well implemented.'*

● 'Micromania haven't released a game for what seems ages, but it was worth the wait. The graphics on this game are excellent and colour is used so as to create a very attractive games. *Project Future* is a very good maze shoot em up, a bit like a 'Berserk' game but with a purpose. Sound is used quite well with the usual accompaniment of noises you'd expect from this sort of game. Picking up a gun on your travels will re-energise your fire power. The only disadvantage of doing this is that it prevents you from wearing the protective power suit. The overall feel is one of a well thought out game that has a lot to offer. I can't wait for the next one from Micromania.'




Moving towards the cross-shaped Transporter

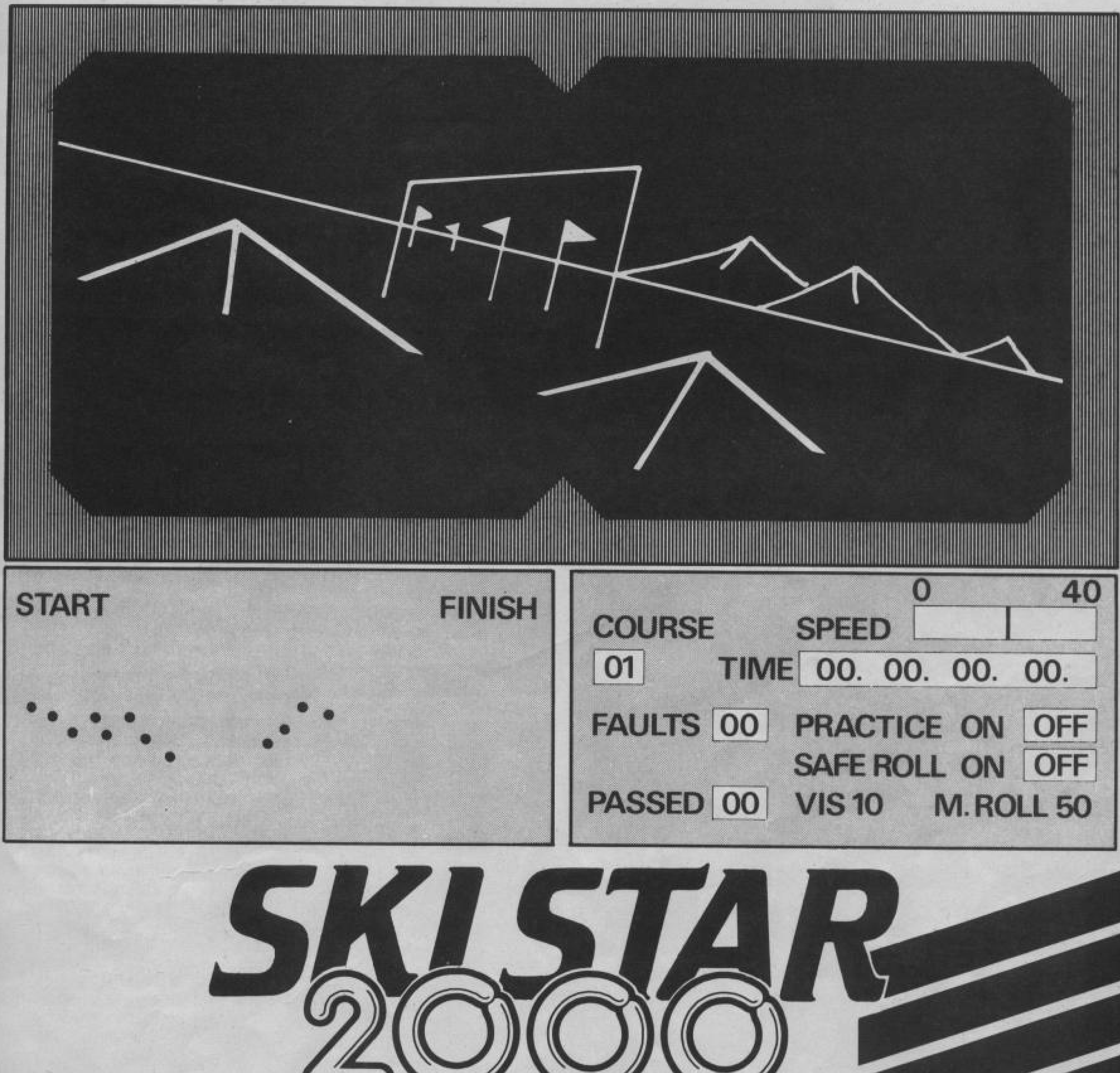
### COMMENTS

**Control keys:** N/M left/right, A/Z up/down, remaining bottom row to fire
**Joystick:** Kempston, AGF, Protek, Sinclair 2, Ram Turbo
**Keyboard play:** very responsive, eight-directional movement
**Use of colour:** excellent
**Graphics:** very good, smooth and detailed, good size
**Sound:** excellent and tuneful
**Skill levels:** 1
**Lives:** 5
**Screens:** 256
**General rating:** very good, addictive and everything works really well.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 88% |
| **Graphics** | 92% |
| **Playability** | 92% |
| **Getting started** | 86% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 91% |
| **Value for money** | 89% |
| **Overall** | **90%** |

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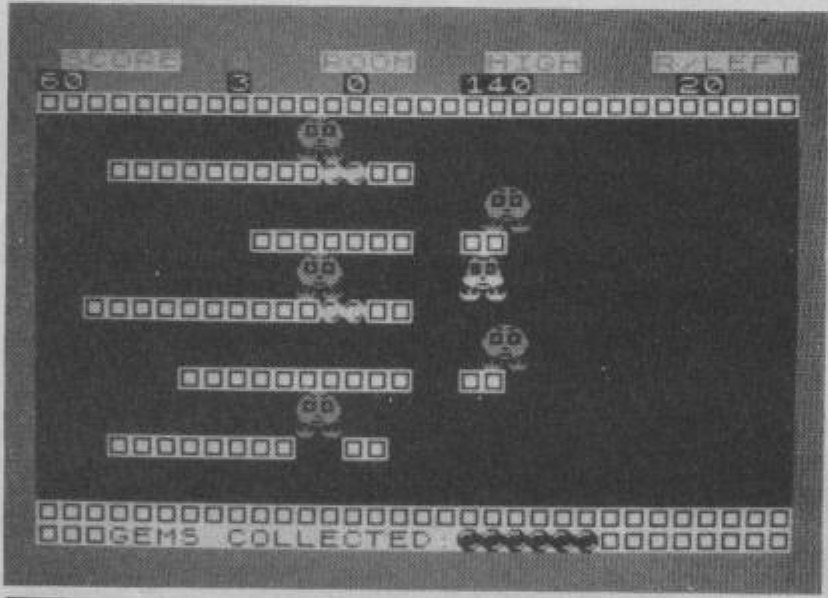

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# ROBOT RUMPUS

Producer: **Atlantis**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **S P Ralfe**

Another budget-priced game from Atlantis for those with a quick hand and fast eyes. Your object is to help Rory Robot stop the rebel robots from gaining control of a complex. To do this you need to collect all the power gems from the various rooms in the game and escape to the next room. Each screen is composed of five platforms of varying lengths and each positioned differently. In each platform are two power gems which can be collected. Between the platforms enemy robots sail along at speed, bouncing back and forth. Rory starts off at the bottom (the only safe spot) and the idea is to nip up and run over the power gems then get out of the way of the other robots. When gems are collected, the resulting hole left in the platform can be used to get up higher, although it is always possible to nip up the edges of the screen round the ends of the platforms as well. When all the gems on a screen have been collected an exit appears at the bottom of the screen for Rory to leave by.

Each room has a different layout of platforms and each time you play a game the screens are randomly altered. By room 15 the rebels are getting angrier and life becomes more difficult.




*'You' are the paler robot at the centre of the screen in ROBOT RUMPUS. Gems to be collected are left on the top two platforms.*

## CRITICISM

● *'Robot Rumpus is a fairly fast moving game which is relatively playable. I enjoyed the game for a while but its overall objective and the general repetetiveness made it rather unexciting. It's a good budget game but lacking in variation.'*

● *'Budget games are of necessity fairly simple both in content and graphical appearance; the important thing is whether at the end of the day they are worth the money, and I would say that* Robot Rumpus *is well worth the 2 quid. It does have the constructional look of a rather old BASIC-type game, and there is no variation on the playing theme. On the other hand it is fast and quite difficult, relying on quick responses and accurate key or joystick control to beat the enemy robots. Once you get the hang of it, a certain addictiveness creeps in because you keep wanting to beat the next screen. I must say I enjoyed it, although I would think younger players would find it more appealing in the long run than the general arcade freak.'*

● 'This game is very original, I can't say I've seen anything like it before except perhaps a slight resemblance to *Factory Breakout*. The graphics in this game are quite cute in the sense that they are different and very imaginative; they're colourful, and cheerful. The game is hard to play at first but this quickly wears off as you get into the swing of it. I found I could complete screen after screen without too much bother. Probably appeals more to the younger player, but quite good value.'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys:** O/P left/right, Q/Z up/down
**Joystick:** Kempston
**Keyboard play:** sensible positions, a little finicky on movement of Rory
**Use of colour:** average
**Graphics:** average, but quite fast
**Sound:** simple with some tunes
**Skill levels:** 1
**Lives:** 4
**General rating:** although lacking in content, still playable, mildly addictive and good value for money.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | **60%** |
| **Graphics** | **57%** |
| **Playability** | **69%** |
| **Getting started** | **69%** |
| **Addictive qualities** | **49%** |
| **Value for money** | **60%** |
| **Overall** | **61%** |

# BEAMRIDER

Producer: **ACTIVISION**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Dave Rolfe**

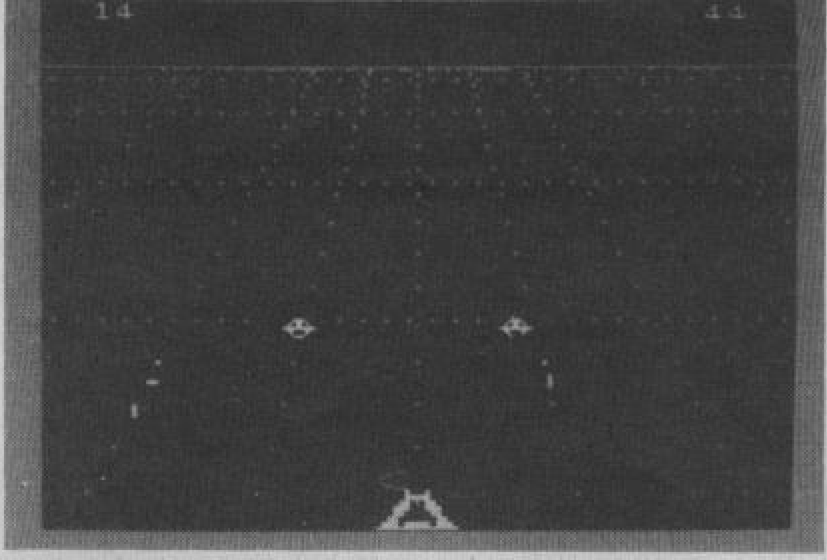
Some months back we reviewed a game called *G-Force* by Eurobyte. *Beamrider* is a 3D version of the game and more resembles the arcade original on which it is based. It is a shoot em up in which you control a fighter which can move left or right at the base (or front) of the screen. You are sitting on a grid of lines which travel in semi-perspective towards the horizon. Down these beamed grids come enemy alien ships of various types. Hazards encountered (depending on sector) include White Saucers which hop from grid line to grid line before settling down, Red space debris which can only be dodged, Yellow Chirper ships, Green Blocker ships, Green Bounce craft, Blue Chargers, Orange Trackers and Red Zig Bombers. The hazards invulnerable to your laser must be avoided or torpedoed, but you only have three torpedoes per sector and these should be saved for real emergencies and the large Mother ship that crosses the horizon from time to time and earns a huge bonus.

The antics of the hazards are not random. green Blockers will lock onto the beam on which you are sitting, swarms of them appearing if a Mothership is about to appear. The saucers fire down the beams at you and the Blockers absorb your shots. Each sector contains fifteen saucers which are ostensibly guarding the Mothership. A counter at the top left tells you how many are left. When they have all been destroyed the Mothership (or Sentinel Ship) will appear. There is also a way of earning additional lives by allowing a Yellow Rejuvenator ship to make contact with your craft. Shooting it will turn it to red debris which kills if it hits you.

## CRITICISM

● *'Beamrider* is quite an original shoot em up. It's a 3D type game in which you basically shoot at almost everything you can (except Yellow Rejuvenators). The action is fast and furious, especially at levels 10 and above. the graphics are okay but not really fantastic, but the game itself makes up for this. *Beamrider1 is a good shoot em up and is a welcome addition to the Activision range. Overall, fairly addictive to say the least.'*

● *'The effect of perspective is reasonable with the radiating beams and forwards moving horizontal beams. Graphics are not detailed but they move smoothly and*



*Two white saucers approach down the beams towards in Activision's BEAMRIDER.*

*very fast. What makes* Beamrider *a clever shoot em up is the way the various nasties act. Blue Chargers have an unpleasant habit of taking seconds to fade off the bottom of the screen, thus trapping you if unlucky. The Green Bouncers dart up and down beams, switching beams at irregular distances from your craft so you can never be sure what they will do next. The game is simple to look at but quite complex to play well and is certainly addictive. Lots of sound helps the fun.'*

● 'I thought games like this had gone out of the window years ago, well on the Spectrum anyhow. It seems as though the theme has been revamped somewhat and an attempt has been made to give a true 3D impression of 'Beamrider'. It seems to me that this game will suit many talents of different people, namely quick thinking, quick reactions, good hand/eye co-ordination and a muscular firing finger. The game progresses quite well from level 1 to the higher levels where there are far more objects whizzing about on the screen that tend to make life truly impossible. The graphics don't take 3D to the extreme but are effective and fast. I especially liked the flashing border when an alien is destroyed which adds to the atmosphere, even though this is a commonly used device for explosions, but it seemed to work well here. *Beamrider* turns out to be quite a fast and surprisingly addictive game.'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys**: O/P left/right, Z to fire laser, Q to fire torpedo (forward on joystick)
**Joystick**: A poor point about Activision games is that they fail to mention joystick options on the inlays, but you can use AGF, Protek, Kempston, Sinclair 2
**Keyboard play**: very responsive and well laid out
**Use of colour**: very good
**Graphics**: above average, not too detailed, but fast
**Sound**: very good and plenty of it
**Skill levels**: 3 (level 1 starts sector 1: level 2 starts sector 5, and level 3 starts sector 10)
**Lives**: 3 plus rejuvenator
**Screens**: 1
**Special features**: 1 to 4 player option
**General rating**: a good, fast, addictive shoot em up.

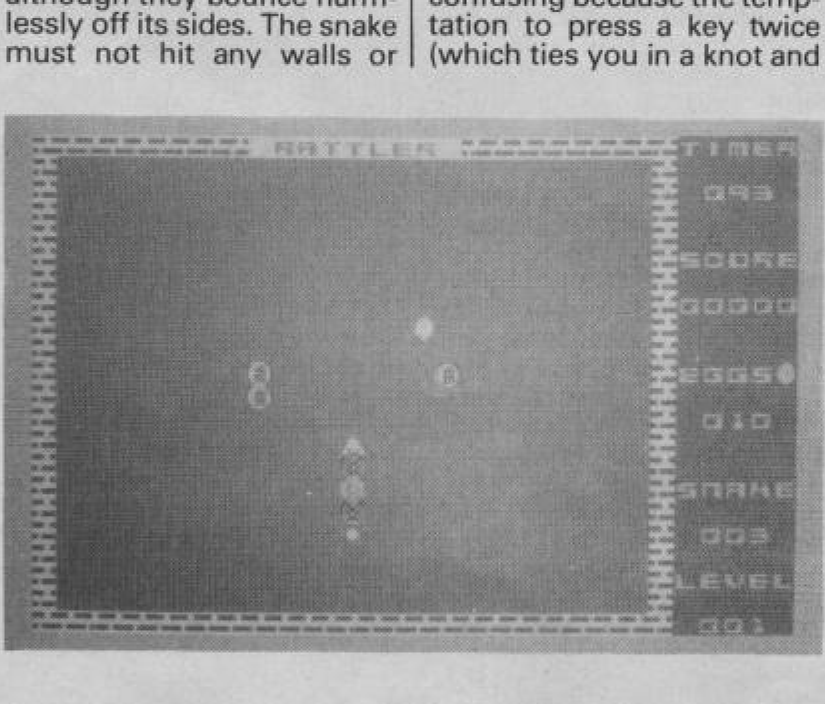
| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 74% |
| **Graphics** | 70% |
| **Playability** | 76% |
| **Getting started** | 69% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 73% |
| **Value for money** | 54% |
| **Overall** | **69%** |

# RATTLER

Producer: **Atlantis**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: **BASIC and machine code**

*Rattler* is based on the old snake in a garden eating things game, but it has some unusual features to it. For a start off the snake is controlled with only two keys on a clockwise/anti-clockwise basis. The object is to eat all the eggs as they appear, but another unusual feature is that balls are sent sailing into the playing area and these must not be allowed to hit the snake on the head, although they bounce harmlessly off its sides. The snake must not hit any walls or double back on itself. Progressive screens offer more difficulty by adding walls inside the playing area. After the eggs on a screen have been eaten, a door opens up at the bottom of the screen for the snake to exit to the next screen. With each egg eaten the snake gets longer as well.

An option menu allows for the selection of playing speed (9) and level (15), and an extra life is gained with each completed screen




### CRITICISM

● 'As with the other Atlantis game *Robot Rumpus*, this one is a bit old fashioned, but well implemented generally, and quite good fun. I found the rotational control a bit confusing because the temptation to press a key twice (which ties you in a knot and kills you off) is quite strong, and an over-long key press will achieve the same thing of course. The addition of bouncing balls is novel and makes the game difficult. Although on the easier levels *Rattler* is playable, it does get rather hysterical on the higher ones, especially if you go for a fast speed! Not bad value at all, but again, I think it's more likely to appeal to younger players.'

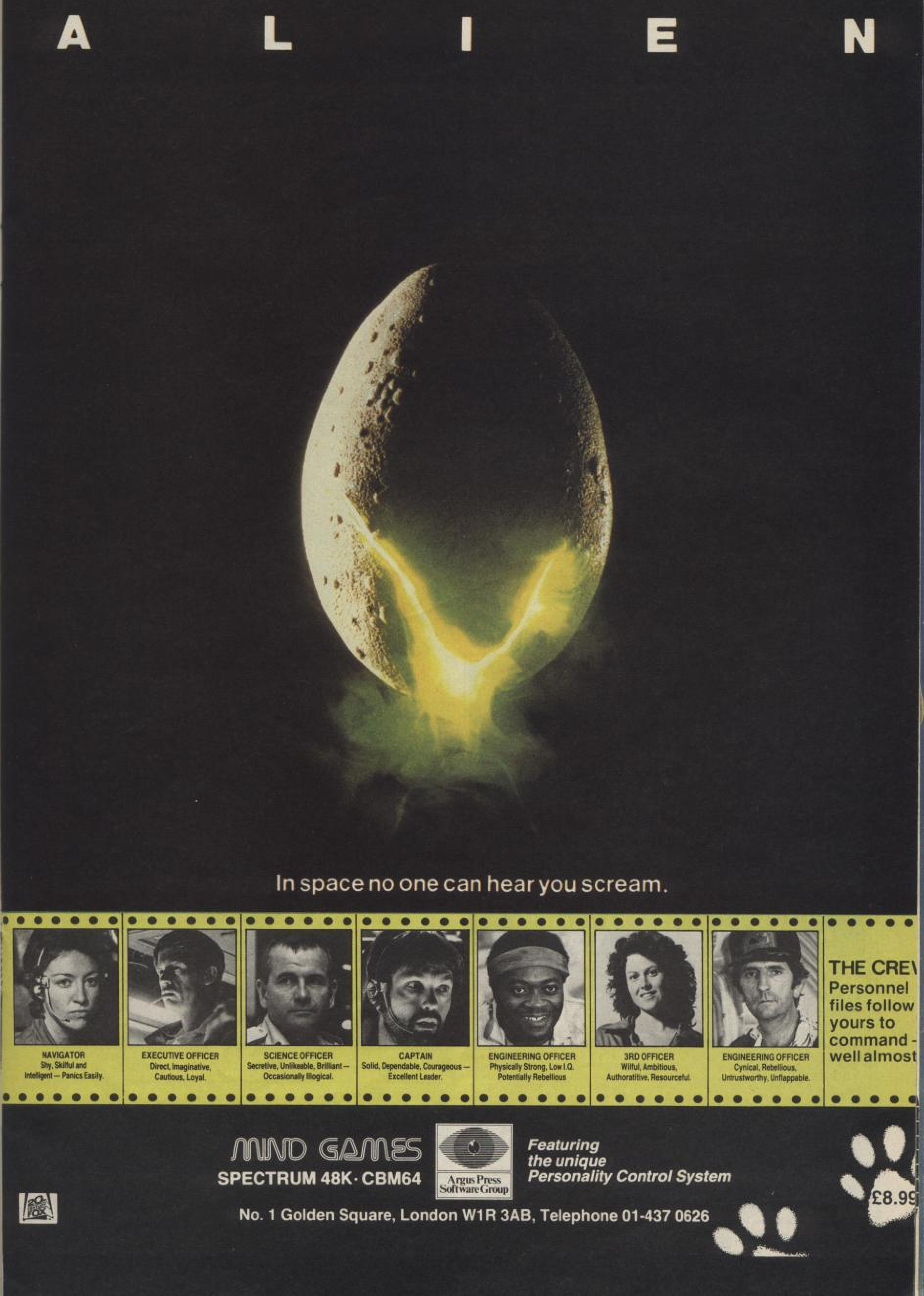
● *'No prizes for guessing what this one is.* Rattler *is a fairly reasonable version of the well known game which responds to keyboard play quite well. The two clock† anti-clockwise keys are easier to use than four directional keys, but they take a little getting used to. The game has several options to make it more difficult but interest soon dies. I remember playing Spectrum games like this almost two years ago! Budget software is okay for getting cheap old arcade versions, but let's try to go forward a little bit.'*

● 'Primitive games never seem to lose their grip on the cheapo market. This one, I must say, must be one of the earliest type of programs written. Being primitive doesn't mean it's easy, if anything, totally the opposite to this. Although the idea is simple (just guiding your ever-stretching snake and collecting eggs while avoiding balls) it is extremely difficult to play. This is probably where its lasting appeal will come in, just to see how long you can get your snake. Not a game that I would tell you to all rush out and buy, but it does prove that an extremely simple idea can be quite effective.'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys**: N/M rotate left/right (use cursors on hi-score entry, this is not mentioned anywhere)
**Joystick**: not really needed but Kempston
**Keyboard play**: simple but hard to start
**Use of colour**: effective but simple
**Graphics**: simple, fast but smooth enough, the balls are effective
**Sound**: some tunes, not much else
**Skill levels**: 9 speeds, 15 levels, 4 ball difficulties
**Screens**: 15
**General rating**: a simple game idea which works well because of the playing options, good value for younger players.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 66% |
| **Graphics** | 40% |
| **Playability** | 50% |
| **Getting started** | 52% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 45% |
| **Value for money** | 62% |
| **Overall** | **53%** |



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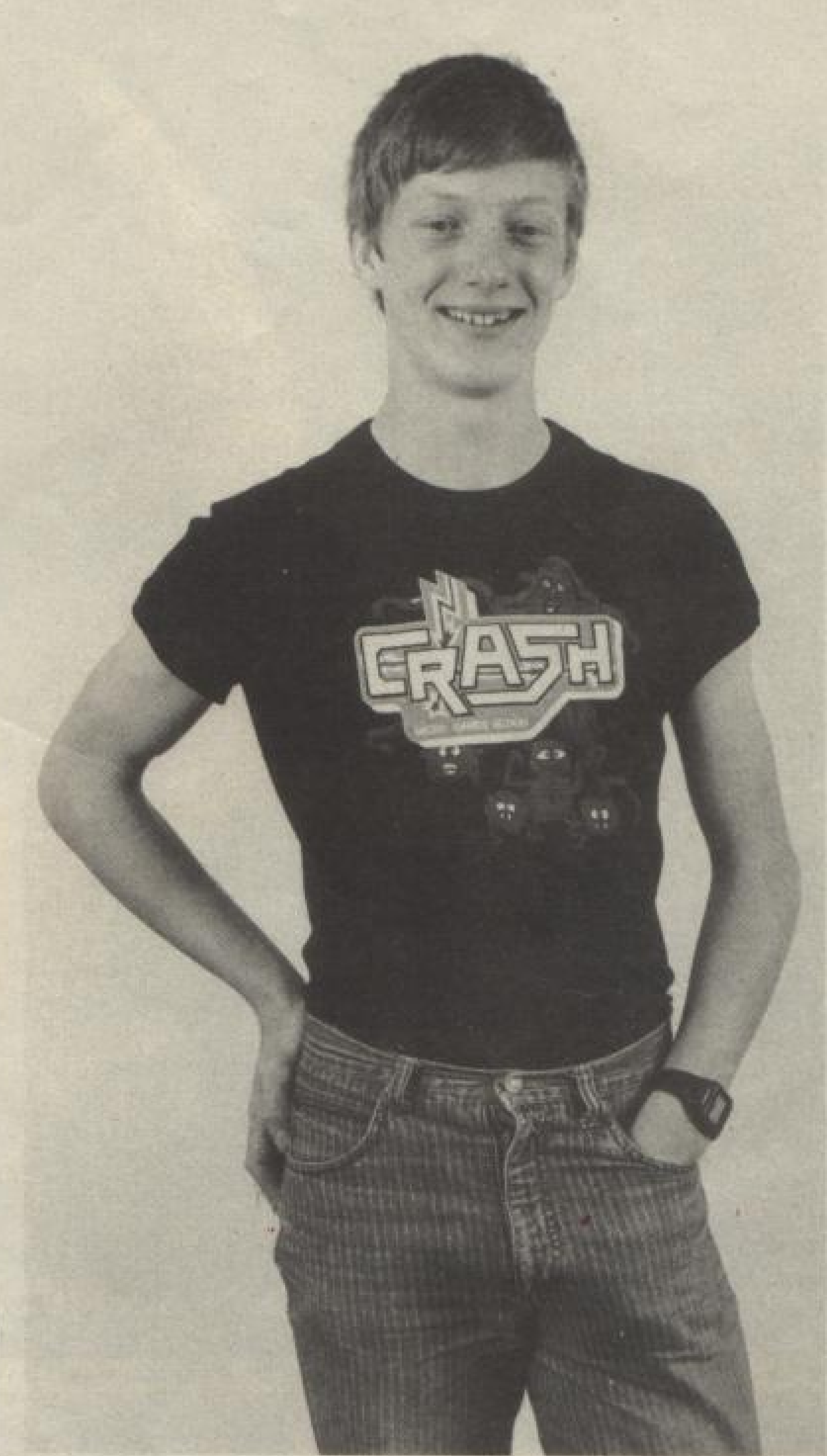
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There are a lot of new entries to this month's chart, 10 in fact. Trilogies, completed or incomplete are the top winners though, with **Ultimate**'s *Knight Lore* at number 1, *Underwurlde* **at number 2 and** *Sabre Wulf* still doing well at the number 5 slot. And in between **Beyond**'s *Doomdark's Revenge* and *Lords of Midnight* stand at 3 and 4 respectively, with *Doomdark* having climbed a massive 39 places. **Realtime**'s *Starstrike* makes another climb, up 4 places to this month's number 8. First of the new entries is **Ocean**'s *Matchday*, in at number 9; and the other new entries include *Booty, Ghostbusters, Airwolf, Cyclone, Boulder Dash, Go for Gold, Deus ex Machina, Turmoil* and *Steve Davis Snooker*. For **Firebird**, *Booty* is the first budget priced game to make a big entry in the CRASH Hotline Chart. **Vortex** are doing well too, with all three of Costa Panayi's 3D games in the chart, *Android 2* still clinging on at 50. **Microsphere**'s amazing *Skool Daze* looks set for as long a stay as their highly addictive *Wheelie*, which is this month's number 34.

There's a few new entries in the Adventure Chart as well, but predictably the number 1 slot goes to **Beyond**'s *Doomdark's Revenge*. **Myzar** improve their position, up to number 2 with *Out of the Shadows*, and *Tir Na Nog*, also featuring in the main chart, leaps up from 18 to 4 for **Gargoyle Games**. The second ever game from **Dorcas**, *Runes of Zendos* makes a first time appearance this month at the high spot of number 6. **Games Workshop** hang onto their position well, down a slot to number 10. *Valhalla* pops up again at 20, and new entries from **Interceptor** with *Message from Andromeda*, **Arrowsoft** with *Flight from the Dark*, **Domark**'s *Eureka!* makes it in at 25, and the engagingly humorous *Valkyrie 17* from the **Ram Jam Corporation** appears for the first time at 29.




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Whether you phone or write in, all names go into the voluminous bag to be drawn monthly. First out receives **£40 worth of software** plus a CRASH tee shirt, and the five runners-up receive three issues of CRASH free plus a CRASH tee shirt.

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## TOP 50 FOR MARCH

*(Figures in parenthesis indicate last month's position)*

1 *(10)* **KNIGHT LORE** Ultimate
2 *(11)* **UNDERWURLDE** Ultimate
3 *(42)* **DOOMDARK'S REVENGE** Beyond
4 *( 4)* **LORDS OF MIDNIGHT** Beyond
5 *( 1)* **SABRE WULF** Ultimate
6 *( 6)* **DALEY THOMPSON'S DECATHLON** Ocean
7 *( 3)* **MONTY MOLE** Gremlin Graphics
8 *(12)* **STARSTRIKE** Realtime
9 *(—)* **MATCHDAY** Ocean
10 *( 7)* **PYJAMARAMA** Mikro-Gen
11 *(31)* **SKOOL DAZE** Microshpere
12 *( 5)* **MATCH POINT** Psion/Sinclair
13 *(24)* **TIR NA NOG** Gargoyle Games
14 *(16)* **AVALON** Hewson Consultants
15 *(—)* **BOOTY** Firebird
16 *( 6)* **JET SET WILLY** Software projects
17 *( 9)* **ATIC ATAC** Ultimate
18 *(—)* **GHOSTBUSTERS** Activision
19 *(17)* **MANIC MINER** Software Projects
20 *( 8)* **FULL THROTTLE** Micromega
21 *(—)* **AIRWOLF** Elite
22 *(—)* **CYCLONE** Vortex
23 *(48)* **JASPER** Micromega
24 *(—)* **BOULDER DASH** Front Runner
25 *(35)* **SHERLOCK** Melbourne House
26 *(26)* **DARKSTAR** Design Design
27 *(15)* **TLL** Vortex
28 *(32)* **AMERICAN FOOTBALL** Argus
29 *(37)* **BACKPACKERS/UNIVERSE** Fantasy
30 *(25)* **BEACH-HEAD** US Gold
31 *(—)* **GO FOR GOLD** Hill MacGibbon
32 *(13)* **LUNAR JETMAN** Ultimate
33 *(40)* **FIGHTER PILOT** Digital Integration
34 *(20)* **WHEELIE** Microshpere
35 *(19)* **AUTOMANIA** Mikro-Gen
36 *(21)* **CODE NAME MAT** Micromega
37 *(22)* **CHUCKIE EGG** A&F Software
38 *(23)* **THE HOBBIT** Melbourne House
39 *(—)* **DEUS EX MACHINA** Automata
40 *(49)* **JETPAC** Ultimate
41 *(—)* **TURMOIL** Bug-Byte
42 *(39)* **THE QUILL** Gilsoft
43 *(38)* **PSYTRON** Beyond
44 *(28)* **TRASHMAN** New Generation
45 *(—)* **STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER** CDS
46 *(14)* **MOON ALERT** Ocean
47 *(33)* **AD ASTRA** Gargoyle Games
48 *(30)* **FRANK N STEIN** PSS
49 *(18)* **KOKOTONI WILF** Elite
50 *(46)* **ANDROID 2** Vortex

# VOTE for the CHARTS



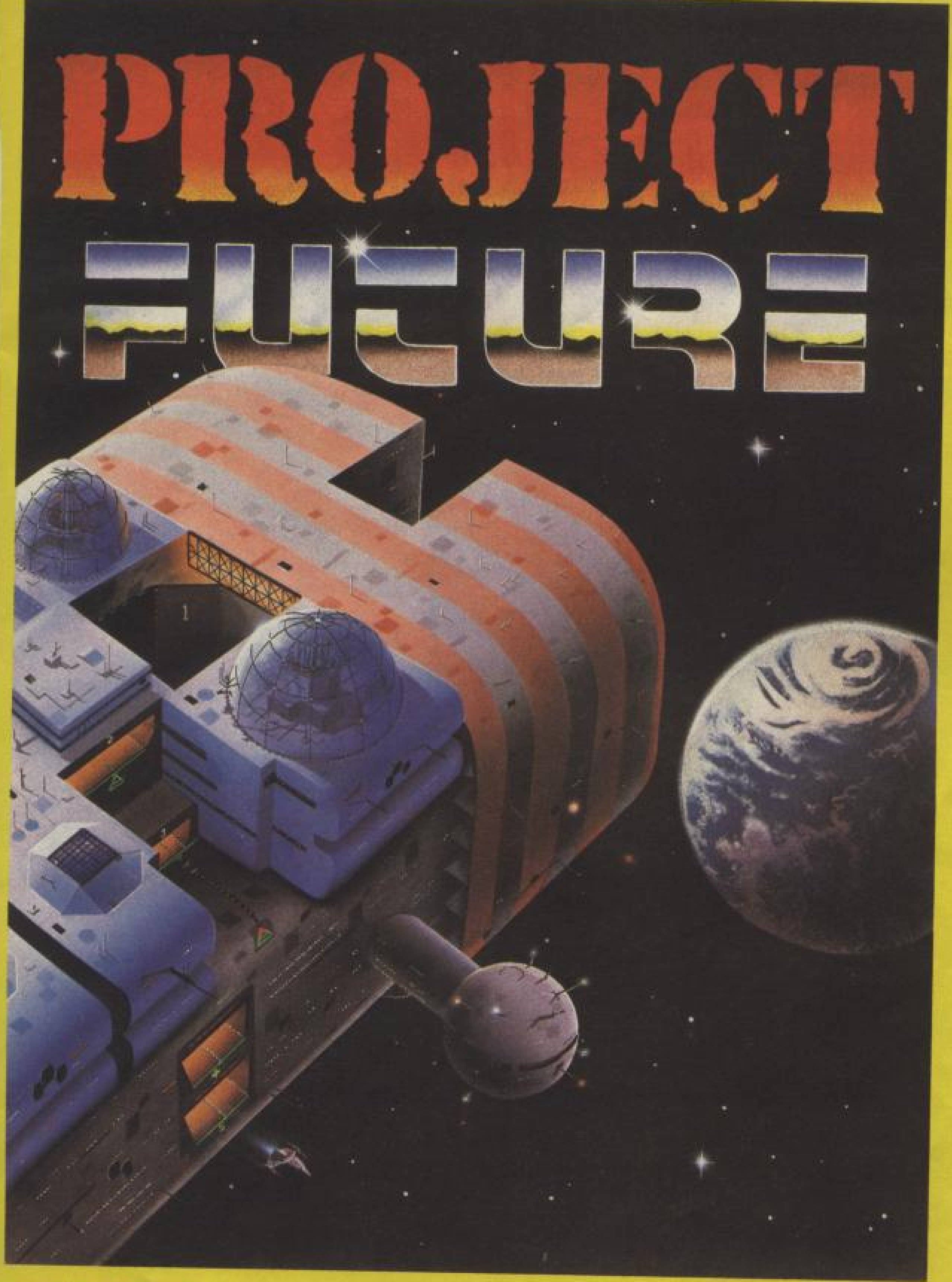
This month's Adventure Chart Winner is **Susan Jolley** of Warrington, Cheshire, and she receives a voucher for £12 worth of software. The runners-up are: **J. Harvey** from Breaston, Derby; **Lewis Cohen** from Whittlesey, Lincs; **Alan Gough** of Hythe, Southampton, Hants; and **CJ Beck** from Rotherham, who each get a T-shirt.

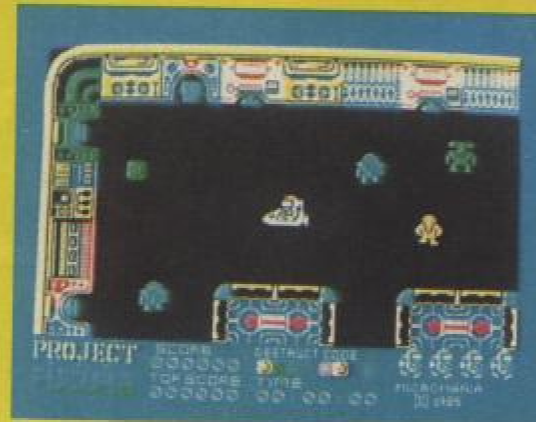
## ADVENTURE CHART

*(Figures in parenthesis indicate last month's position)*

1 *( 1)* **DOOMDARK'S REVENGE** Beyond
2 *( 4)* **OUT OF THE SHADOWS** Myzar
4 *(18)* **TIR NA NOG** Gargoyle Games
5 *( 7)* **RETURN TO EDEN** Level 9
6 *(—)* **RUNES OF ZENDOS** Dorcas
7 *( 8)* **SHERLOCK** Melbourne House
8 *( 3)* **KENTILLA** Micromega
9 *(12)* **TWIN KINGDOM VALLEY** Bug-Byte
10 *( 9)* **TOWER OF DESPAIR** Games Workshop
11 *(26)* **HAMPSTEAD** Melbourne House
12 *( 5)* **THE HOBBIT** Melbourne House
13 *( 6)* **SNOWBALL** Level 9
14 *(14)* **QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL** Dream
15 *(15)* **THE HULK** Adventure International
16 *(10)* **WAYDOR** IMS
17 *(17)* **THE FINAL MISSION** Incentive
18 *(24)* **URBAN UPSTART** Shepherd
19 *(22)* **ORACLES CAVE** Dorcas
20 *(—)* **VALHALLA** Legend
21 *(29)* **MESSAGE FROM ANDROMEDA** Interceptor
22 *(23)* **AVALON** Hewson Consultants
23 *(—)* **FLIGHT FROM THE DARK** Arrow Books
24 *(19)* **COLOSSAL ADVENTURE** Level 9
25 *(—)* **EUREKA** Domark
26 *(17)* **VELNORS LAIR** Quicksilva
27 *(27)* **SHIP OF DOOM** Artic
28 *(28)* **GOLDEN APPLE** Artic
29 *(—)* **VALKYRIE 17** Ram Jam Corporation
30 *(21)* **MOUNTAINS OF KET** Incentive


ULTIMATE
PLAY THE GAME
PRESENTS
JETMAN
JOHN RICHARDSON
OUR HERO, HAVING USED THE FABULOUS EYE OF OKTUP, HAS DISCOVERED THAT IT HAS THE POWER TO SEE INTO THE FUTURE! HE IS OVERJOYED! HE IS THRILLED! HE IS AMAZED! ALSO...
GAAWSH!
HE IS STUPID!!
IT'S A VIDEO PLAYER!
SENSING OUR HERO'S EMOTIONS, HIS COMPANIONS DEMONSTRATE THEIR CONFIDENCE IN HIM....
I JUST LOOK INTO IT AN' I SEE PICTURES!
EMERGENCY SPACESUITS
WARNING! THIS SHIP IS ABOUT TO CRASH!
THIS LI'L GIZMO WILL MAKE ME AWFULLY JOLLY RICH!
TO THE LIFEBOATS
C'MON!
COUNTDOWN TO CRASH... 10...9...8...7...
COR! WHERE'S THAT DRAUGHT COMIN' FROM?
ZZOWEEE
I'D BETTER GO SHUT THE DOO...
BUMF
'S GOOD HERE, INNIT?
YAS!
LET'S GO SEE WHERE THE LOONY CRASHED!
THERE MIGHT BE ENOUGH LEFT OF HIM FOR A SNACK!
HOKAY!
WHA' HAPPEN! WHA' WENT 'BUMF'? WHA'S ALL THIS WIERD PINK GRASS?..
AW, HECK!
...AT LEAST I'VE STILL GOT THE EYE OF OKTUP!
DUH... SOMTINK JUD WEN BUMF OD MY HED...
WAD IT CHOO JUD WEN BUMF OD MY HED, EH?
ARGH!
CHOKE!
HUH?
ACK!
GULP!
I DON' WANNA DIE!
I DON' WANNA DIE!
I DON' WANNA DIE!
I DON' WANNA DIE!
I DON' WANNA DIE!
WOS DIS?
BWA!
BLEET!
HO!
KA-POOF
GOSHAROOTIE! THE UMPHALUMP HAS ACTIVATED THE EYE OF OKTUP! IT'S GONNA GET A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE...
CAW! HIT AM DAT IKKLE LOONY!
FOOD! FOOD! FOOD!
LOONY GOTTUM FOOD! ME LIKEE FOOD, SO ME LIKEE IKKLE LOONY. YAS!
GIVE ME BACK MY EYE!
ME KEEP IKKLE LOONY AS UM PET!
OKAY! YOU HAVE THE EYE!
NO SWEAT!
IT GOT MY LUNCH!
IT GOT MY EYE!
CAN OUR HERO STAND BEING A PET? IS HE HOUSE-TRAINED?? NEX' MUNF!







**NEW** ONLY

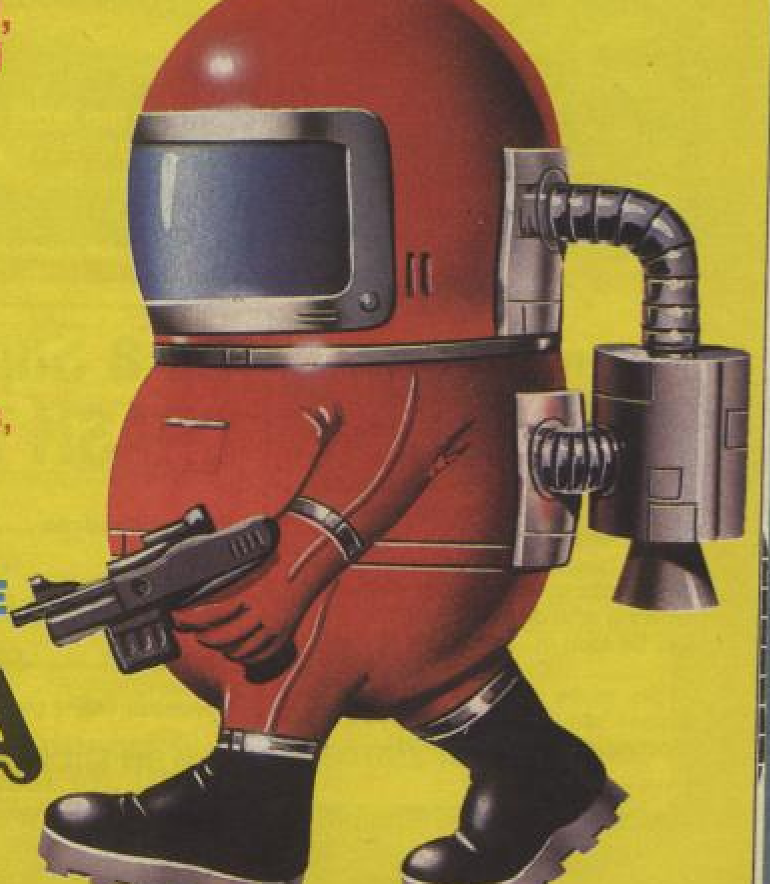
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**The SS FUTURE is a huge labyrinth of a Star Ship, covering 256 screens of the most amazing high resolution graphics ever seen on the Spectrum.**

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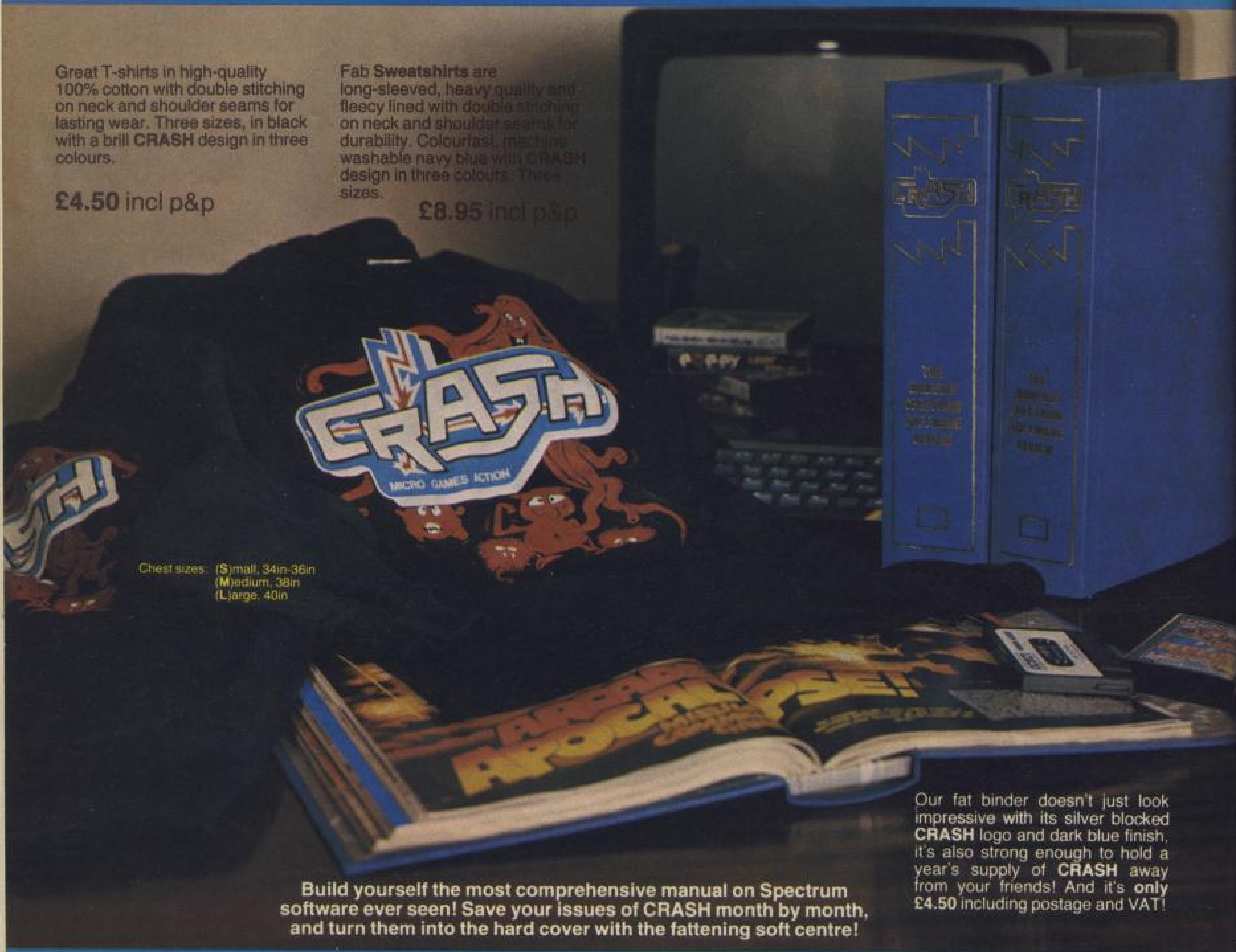
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# CRASH MICRO GAMES ACTION

# T-shirts & Binders Offer




**FREE IN-DEPTH INDEX!**

As **Lloyd Mangram** mentioned in his letters page, he's been told to get it together (we've generously provided him with a second tiny desk) and organise an Index for the 12 issues your binder will hold. The index is **absolutely FREE** to anyone who orders the binder and will be sent automatically in January.

So make sure you turn your issues into the **CRASH Spectrum Software Encyclopaedia!**

## Be a Superior Alien with your very own CRASH T-shirt and sweatshirt!

**Please send me ........CRASH T-shirts** @ £4.50 **S**☐ **M**☐ **L**☐

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**Please allow 28 days for delivery**

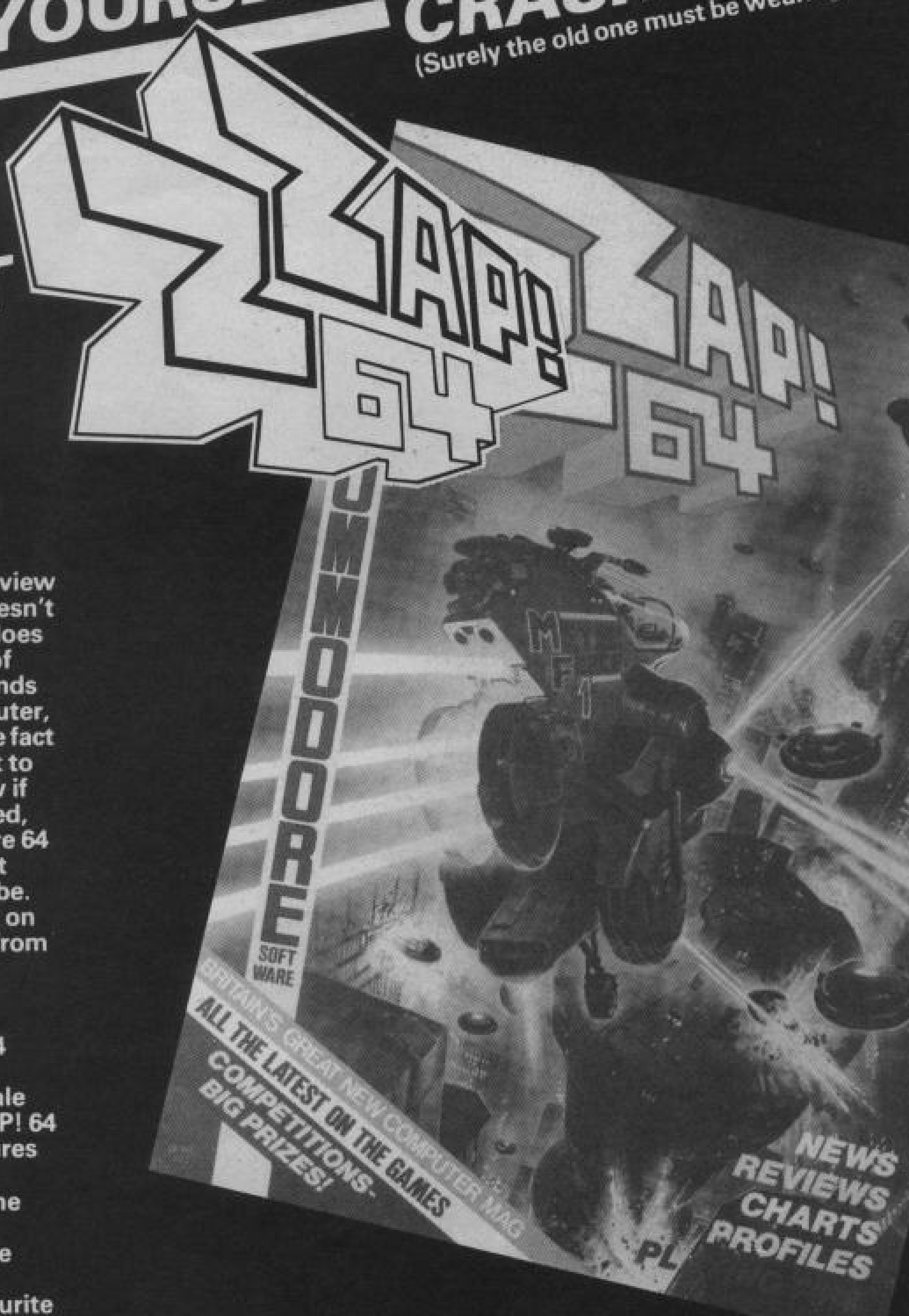
**CRASH MICRO, Freepost, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1BR**

Help a Sadly Neglected Commodore Friend

# AND EARN YOURSELF A FREE CRASH T-SHIRT

(Surely the old one must be wearing out by now!)

# COMING SOON TO A NEWSAGENT NEAR YOUR FRIEND




**Before we tell you about the new exciting Commodore 64 games review monthly ZZAP! 64 (we know it doesn't interest you) let's tell you why it does concern you. As a regular reader of CRASH you must know some friends who own a Commodore 64 computer, who have been moaning about the fact that as a Spectrum owner you get to read a magazine like CRASH. Now if you do know some underprivileged, almost magazine-less Commodore 64 owners, you could tell them about ZZAP! 64 and get them to subscribe. For every subscription we receive on the form below (or a photocopy) from your friends, you'll receive a free CRASH T-shirt worth £4.50!**

**Now we'll tell you about ZZAP! 64**

**The first issue of ZZAP! 64 is on sale from April 11th. Like CRASH, ZZAP! 64 will be packed with exciting features including:**

- **Highly detailed reviews of all the latest 64 games**
- **Stacks of playing tips and game maps**
- **A special chart of readers' favourite games**
- **An adventure section by Steve Cooke (*PCG*'s White Wizard)**
- Hi-score pages with a bold challenge to top-scoring readers
- A regular column by 'Yak the Hairy' Jeff Minter
- Letters (and answers), news, gossip and competitions

ZZAP! 64 is monthly and costs **95p** from a newsagent, but your friends can get a discounted subscription with this form, and as a subscriber they'll be entitled to claim **50p off** any item they order from **ZZAP! 64 Mail Order**, which is run from the same department as CRASH Mail Order (same people in fact)! A subscription for 12 issues of ZZAP! 64 costs £14.50 (post included), but with this form it costs only **£10 (post included)** and the offer lasts until April 30th.

**So if you don't know any Commodore 64 owners, now's the time to make friends! If you do, get them to subscribe and it's a free CRASH T-shirt for each one just for you.**

This special offer lasts until April 30th 1985. For the coupon form to be valid it must be accompanied by the correct payment from your friend in cheque or postal order form. Cash is accepted but not recommended. As soon as we receive form and payment, your CRASH T-shirt will be despatched to you. Please ensure the form is fully completed.

My Commodore 64-owning friend would like to subscribe to the exciting new **ZZAP! 64** monthly magazine for **12** issues at the special 'friend of a CRASH Reader' discount price of **£10** (post included) instead of £14.50, and I should like to receive my **free CRASH T-shirt.**

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# KERRASH! N·E·W·S

## SOFT AID

After Band-Aid, comes **Soft Aid**, brainchild of **Rod Cousens** of Quicksilva.

The project has already won the seal of **Bob Geldorf**'s approval and is being supported by quite a few of the major names in the software world.

A package of games is due out this month, which will include music from the Band-Aid 'Feed the World' record and ten recent best-selling Spectrum programs. All this for £2.99 means it's good value and the fact that proceeds from the package will help the Ethiopian Appeal should make the Soft Aid compilation pack a must.



***CRASH brings you the photographs no other magazines dare print! Everyone else is using pictures of Band Aid star BOB GELDORF, but we know you'd far rather see a pic of ROD COUSENS of Quicksilva who is to SOFT AID what BOB is to BAND AID. Don't say we aren't daring....***

## GOT A NEW MOTOR?

Hah! **Dk'tronics** have got it wrong — but it takes a *Minder* fan to catch them out. They're launching *Minder*, which is based on Thames TV's series and stars Terry and Arfur in '. . . a true representation of the TV programme.'

We're nit-picking really, and it sounds like a brill game what with familiar characters like Dave and Ricott together with a cast of thousands. But Arfur scurries around in his trusty 'Merc' in the Dk'tronics version, according to the blurb — and we all know Arfur drives a Jag/Daimler don't we?

## MSX MAGIC

'JVC is to embark on a further series of nationwide MSX Dealer Worships, which follows the over-subscribed first series.'

*Computer Trade Weekly*

Well, if you've got faith in your product....

## THE TALE OF TWO DINNERS . . .

It seems that an air of naughtiness has pervaded the **Computer Trade Association** this year, or at least their agents.

**Turret-Wheatland**, publishers of *Leisure Electronics Trader* and organisers of the LET '85 International Trade Show which takes place this month, dropped us a line the other day congratulating us on our nomination for the Computer Trade Association's annual awards.

T-W's magazine, *LET*, is the official journal of the CTA, and the awards will be presented at a posh dinner organised for the purpose, it seems. We were invited to come to this dinner — '. . . to hear the announcement of the award winners — and to be there to collect your award if you should be a winner.'

'How sweet', we thought, '. . . wonder what category we've been nominated for?' A phone call or two later, we learnt that we HADN'T been nominated for anything.

Coincidentally, we heard that another firm which was taking a stand at the exhibition, like us had been told they had been 'nominated' for an award and invited to the £18.95 a head beano '. . . to hear the announcement' etc. Oddly, they too had checked, this time with no less than three people at Turret-Wheatland, and had also been told that no, after all, they hadn't been nominated for an award.

Begin to smell a Roland somewhere?

One is left wondering how many people on the exhibitors mailing list for the LET '85 show were 'nominated' for an award — and more interestingly, how many coughed up the greater part of two hundred quid for a table at the dinner in the belief that they stood a chance of picking up an award.

We hereby nominate Turret-Wheatland for the CRASH annual awards, and would be happy for them to join us for a pie and chips pub lunch in Ludlow to hear our announcement of the award winner — and be here to collect their award if they should be a winner.

Tickets for the CRASH Award Pub Luncheon are available to award nominees at £13.50 each, and a table at our local may be booked at the all-inclusive price of £135.00 for ten. THESE PRICES INCLUDE A HALF OF OLD ROTGUT'S FLATULENCE BITTER AND COMMEMORATIVE BEER MAT. All bookings should be made, in writing, to our Mr Cunningman — cheques made payable to the CRASH Slushfund, No 1 account.

The CRASH team will be at the LET'85 show, probably existing on sandwiches despite Turret-Wheatland's efforts, and we'll bring you news of all that's new and wonderful at the show in our April edition. Somehow, I doubt we'll be publishing a list of the CTA award winners.

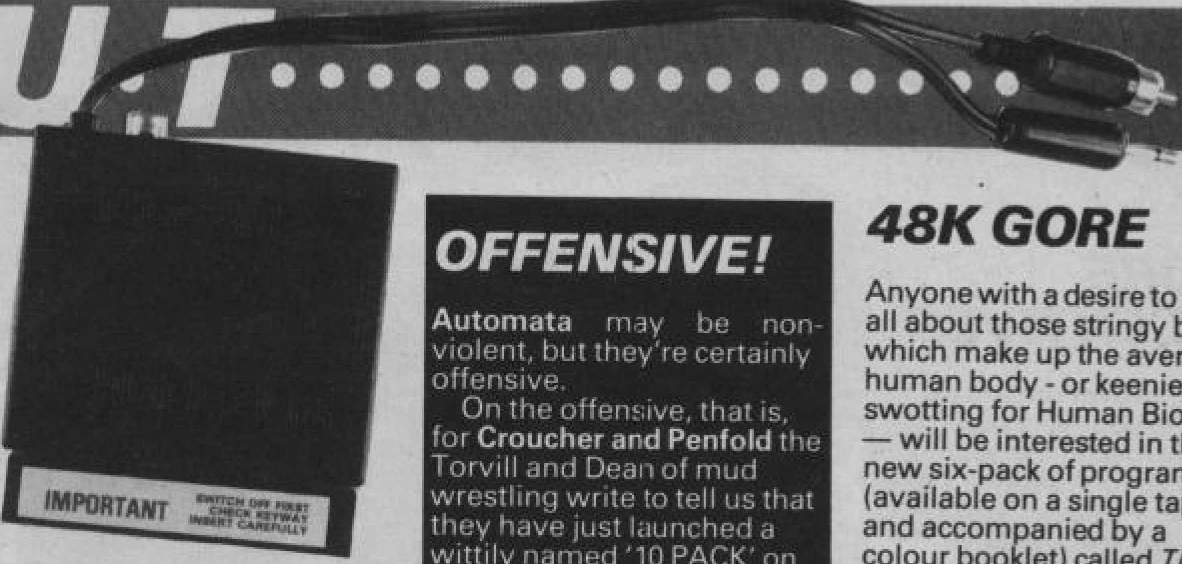
## IT'S THE OLIVER FREY SHOW . . .!

Good news for Oliphiliacs! Our illustrious Art Editor, **Oliver Frey** is mounting an exhibition of his original work for CRASH (and a few other people) in the **Silk Top Hat Gallery** in Ludlow.

Running from 1st to 22nd April, it provides a rare chance to view the CRASH covers in their original, giant-size form, without all those words Roger (you know — dash Ed) Kean insists we must put on them, like the price and what's in the magazine — as if you weren't going to read the magazine for yourselves, I mean really, sometimes Roger can be . . . aargh!

*The Silk Top Hat Gallery is in Quality Square, Ludlow, (tel: 0584 5363), and on the evening of Friday 12th only, Oliver will be giving a talk which starts at 9.30. We are not sure when Graeme will be back yet, but are ringing the hospital daily —ED*

# I·N·P·U·T




## CURRAH CONFUSION

Some confusion seems to exist about the position of Currah Speech units, now that Currah have gone into receivership. **Welwyn Systems** made the units for Currah and when Currah went down were left with 'vast' stocks of components and assembled units. Under the terms of the contract that existed between Currah (as was) and Welwyn (as is), Welwyn are now allowed to sell these stocks — which they are doing. Once the current stocks held by Welwyn are exhausted, they won't be able to make any more Micro Speech, Micro Slot or Speech 64 units, but, as they have hired **Steve Currah** himself, may well launch some new products. . . .

**Dk'tronics**, on the other hand, have hired a couple of Currah's research and development staff and now own the rights to make ex-- Currah products for as long as they like. 'We've bought the Currah trading name, intellectual property, tools etc, and will continue to sell and support the products as long as there is a market-place' says **David Heelas**, Dk'tronics' MD.

So now you know.



***MIKE MEEK (left) from Mikro-Gen with pop star MIKE BERRY after the recording of the song EVERY-ONE'S A WALLY, which is going out as a single and on the reverse side of the new Wally game of the same name.***

## OFFENSIVE!

**Automata** may be non-violent, but they're certainly offensive.

On the offensive, that is, for **Croucher and Penfold** the Torvill and Dean of mud wrestling write to tell us that they have just launched a wittily named '10 PACK' on sale for £10.

*Crusoe, Piromania, Olympimania, Yakzee, Morris Meets the Bikers, Dartz, Pi-Balled, New Wheels John, Pi-in'ere*, and *Pi-eyed* are all included in this compilation, offered as part of the Automata Spring Offensive.

Has the little pink-nosed fellow lost his marbles? Too much brandy and suffrage for Croucher? Full details will no doubt be revealed by the boys in Portsmouth (0705 735242) . . . how long can this lunacy last? Get in quick, while the going's good.

## YET MORE DALEY!!!

If your joysticks can stand the pace of another bashing, *Decathlon* freaks will be delighted to hear that **Ocean** is launching a follow up called *Daley Thompson's Super Test* in May. It will feature 10 more popular events including cycling, swimming, canoeing and clay-pigeon shooting. The Spectrum version will be priced at £6.95.

## 48K GORE

Anyone with a desire to learn all about those stringy bits which make up the average human body - or keenies swotting for Human Biology — will be interested in the new six-pack of programs (available on a single tape and accompanied by a colour booklet) called *The Living Body*.

**Martech** have involved Dr Christiaan Barnard as consultant on the project — which probably explains why one title in the series is called 'Heart Operation'. Hopefully, there won't be too many blood-stained Speccies as a result of DIY heart transplant attempts prompted by the programs. £19.95 for the complete package.

## SLOMO BACK AGAIN

Confusion may surround the present status of that cunning little device, the SLOMO, made by **Nidd Valley Micro Products**, not least because we told you that Cambridge Computing had gone to the wall last issue.

Cambridge, however, were only making the SLOMO on behalf of Nidd Valley Micro, who are alive and well on Thistle Hill, Knaresborough (Tel 0423 864488) and who will be happy to continue supplying SLOMO's at £14.95

## MANIC MODEMS

Telephone receivers aren't all they're talking about down at **Prism**, whose 1200/75 baud modem for the Spectrum was recently reduced to £69.95, for the company has sadly gone into receivership — which has already sent a few ripples round the industry.

Modems are certainly becoming à la mode for the Spectrum, with the **Unicom** modem — renamed the **Demon** — due to have Spectrum compatibility any day now. We're currently trying to coerce our in-house hardware guru, Franco, to have a look at this area of activity, and with luck we should be able to report back soon.

Meanwhile, here's a picture of an acoustic coupler sent to us by **Dynamics**. They tell us that it should be available for the Spectrum within a few weeks. Sadly, they didn't date their letter, tell us the price or give a phone number so's we could ring and ask . . . further details, as and when they become available.



# N·E·W·S I·N·P·U·T··

## MORE INCENTIVES

If you've ever dreamt of owning your very own arcade machine, coughing up £6.95 for Incentive's new release — *Moon Cresta* — would be a good move.

*Moon Cresta*'s already a CRASH SMASH (see Page 20), and **Ian Andrew**, the big cheese at Incentive — pictured here handing over a shiny new video to **Tom Frost**, winner of their *Ket Trilogy* competition — tells us that yer actual Moon Cresta arcade machine, as made by Nichibutsu, is now up for grabs.

Anyone who achieves a score of 30,000 on the game can use the entry form on the cassette inlay to take part in a draw for the machine, which should take place towards the end of this year. Plenty of time to practice too . . . nice fellows, this Incentive crowd.



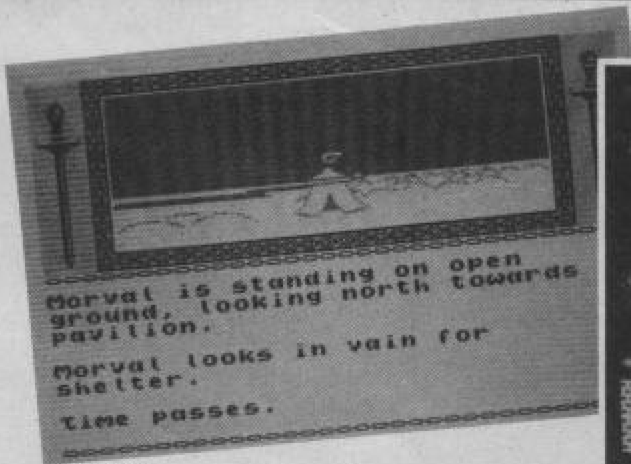

***Ian Andrew hands over the video recorder prize to TOM FROST, winner of the KET TRILOGY competition***

## APOLOGISE CORNER

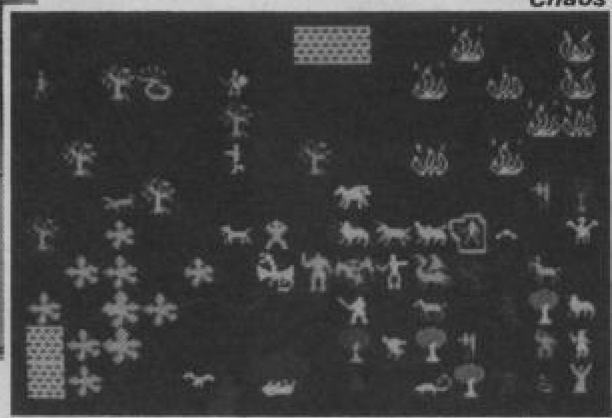
Unfortunately, our review of *Loderunner*, by **Software Projects** was wrongly priced. Oops. Software Projects are really selling *Loderunner* for £9.95.

It wasn't our fault really dept. . . . Derek Brewster reviewed *Curse of the 7 Faces* recently, and credited it to Artic. This wuz wrong, because **Imperial Software** are the people bringing it out. Artic tell us that they were inundated with good programs, and decided to share some of them with Imperial . . . watch out for a sneak preview of Artic's latest effort, coming soon.

## A TALISMAN AGAINST CHAOS




*Talisman*



*Chaos*

Our erstwhile strategist, the very lovely **Angus Ryall**, undaunted by the long trip from London on his damaged motorbike, staggered into the CRASH office for an early lunch at 4pm the other day with a fistful of new releases from **Games Workshop**. None of them was totally completed, but all were in a viewable state.

*Talisman*, designed by **SLUG**, is based on a Games Workshop board game and can be played by between 1 and 4 players in any combination against the computer or not. Through 50 locations split into three sectors, players must build their skills in order to beat each other and the final test of strength. It is a sort of graphical arcade/adventure where each player can wander around the varied locations until something interesting or useful is spotted. Stopping in a location will cause an event pleasant or unpleasant to happen. These events together with collected objects or computer characters add to the skill of the player under the headings Strength, Craft, Lives, Gold and Spells.

*Chaos* by **Julian Gollup** (a member of SLUG) is a game of spell casting for up to eight wizards in any combination against the computer. Each wizard is allocated some spells to begin with and then appears as a character on screen along with the others. In turn you are allowed to choose a spell from your list and cast it either for real or as an illusion. Real spells have a percentage chance of successful casting while illusory spells always succeed, but can be destroyed if another wizard uses his Disbelief spell against them. Once cast, the spell appears on screen and all cast spells can be moved towards other wizards or their spell characters according a movement range table, and then fired at the opposing characters if they are in range. Spells have different strengths and may fight it out for a few rounds before one explodes. The object, of course, is to destroy all the other wizards.

Also under the program loader name of 'Talisman', Angus showed us a new graphical adventure which, until a more suitable release name comes along, they have temporarily named 'Hobbit's Revenge'. This is written by a school teacher called **Alan Davies** and boasts around 3000 locations with lots of graphical views. Superficially like *Lords of Midnight* in appearance (it uses a form of landscaping), this game has more memory in it devoted to the adventure text. In it you control three characters and the game operates in real time. Objects and buildings can often be seen in the views yet not mentioned in the text description. Movement towards something seen, has to be carefully and logically planned to end up at the building's location, whereupon it appears in the text.

These three games should be out within days of you reading this, together with *Key of Hope*, the follow up adventure to *Tower of Despair*, and one other, which may be released as the first ever Games Workshop budget game, is temporarily named 'Bazam'. This is a 'Battlezone' tank game with relatively simple 3D graphics which allow for very fast scrolling, making it the fastest ever game of its type. Features include various tanks, armour (shields) and a firing range.

# PLAYING TIPS

## from ROBIN CANDY



**This month seems to be a bumper month of tips what with maps for *Doomdark's Revenge*, *Tir Na Nog* and *Airwolf*, pokes for both *Underwurlde* and *Knightlore* plus much, much more. So there's plenty to keep you occupied for a month or two. Officially I'm not supposed to give prizes to people who send in pokes etc but if you send in some golden nougat of chewy information that is unique to you then you'll be able to have a super CRASH T-SHIRT. Anyway enough of the intro drivel and on with the tips.**

### CHUCKIE POKE

First off this month is a poke for *Chuckie Egg*, I'm afraid I haven't had time to check this out because we haven't any Chuckie Eggs in stock, anyway it was sent in by **MARK LE—MAY** of Portsmouth.

Type in **MERGE " ": POKE 24501,195: GOTO 1**. When the game has finished loading type in as a direct command **POKE 42837,0** and **RANDOMIZE USR 42000**

### KOKOTONI POKE

This poke comes from **PAUL LEDGER** of Leeds and it's for Elite's *Kokotoni Wilf* and it gives infinite lives.

**MERGE " "** When the screen comes up with the out of memory error then type in.

```
10 POKE 23693,0: CLEAR 24100: LOAD "" CODE: RANDOMIZE USR 65100: LOAD "" CODE: POKE 43742,0: RANDOMIZE USR 41712
```

### NUADA'S SWORD — TIR NA NOG

***Nuada's Sword, as many people stuck in** Tir Na Nog* will know, is one of the quest objects in the game and here is **GRAHAM MORGAN** of Midlothian in bonnie Scotland telling how to find it.

**First get some BONES out of any cave. Then get the FEATHER out of STORMCAVE. Now, go to BADHELM and walk about this area until you find a large hedge with a door in it. Enter this and walk on to DUN DHOMNUIL. Get the HONEYCOMB and go back to BADHELM. Go to the door marked with a B and enter this. You will be in BALDRIG'S SHRINE, drop the feather at the shrine and you will receive an OAK LEAF. Now go back to DUN DHOMNUIL and enter the door marked X with the bones. You will now meet DHOMNUIL, drop the OAK LEAF and he will give you NUADA'S SWORD. Also the crown that CERNOS refers to is the ANTLERS.**

### TIR NA NOG ON MICRODRIVE

**MR CHRIS BOWLER** of Derby found out that the microdrive saving option on *Tir Na Nog* didn't work. So he contacted Gargoyle Games who told him how to transfer *Tir Na Nog* to microdrive.

First enter program A and save it to microdrive as the new header with **SAVE * "m" ;1; "TIRNANOG" LINE 10**

```
10 BORDER 0: PAPER 0: INK 0: CLEAR 26098: LOAD * "m" ;1; "TITLE"SCREEN$: LOAD * "m" ;1; "BTIRNANOG" CODE: RANDOMIZE USR 64774
```

Then **NEW** the program and enter program **B**. This loads in the program from tape and then SAVEs it to microdrive, after POKEing the following machine code in first:

```
10 CLEAR 26098
11 LOAD "" SCREEN$
20 LOAD "A" CODE
30 LOAD "B" CODE 26100
40 FOR I = 64774 TO 64790
50 READ J: POKE I,J
60 NEXT I
65 SAVE * "m" ;1; "TITLE" SCREEN$
70 SAVE * "m" ;1; "BTIRNANOG" CODE 26100, 39436
80 STOP
100 DATA 49,31,94,17,36,94
110 DATA 33,244,101,1,18,151
120 DATA 237,176,195,36,94
```

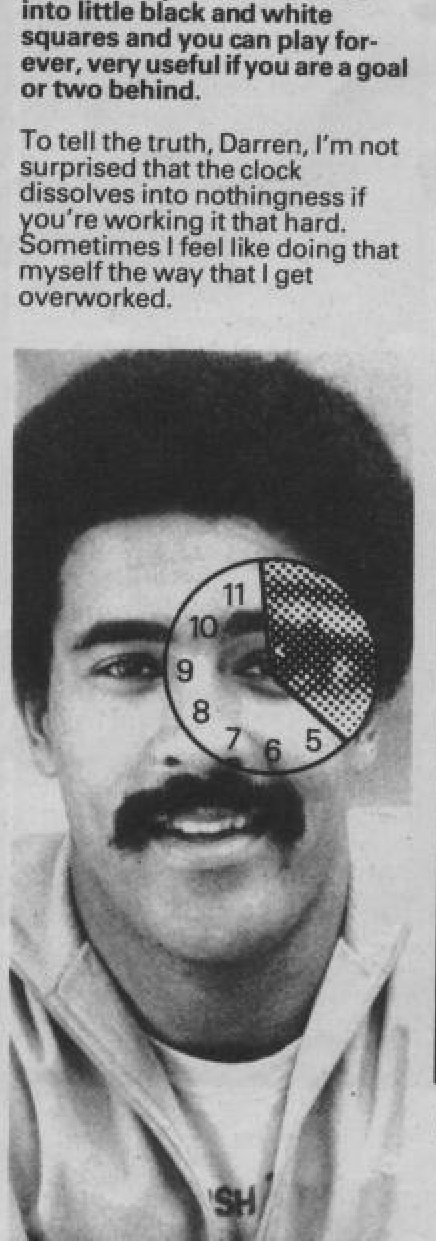
When you have entered program **B**, RUN it. Play the tape and have a microdrive cartridge with at least 48K of space free on it inserted into microdrive 1. When the STOP message appears then type **RANDOMIZE USR 1**, and then load in Tir Na Nog by entering **LOAD * "m" ;1; "TIRNANOG"**

### MATCH DAY HAS GOT BUGS

**MR DARREN PALMER** of Redditch has found a couple of bugs in Ocean's excellent *Match Day*.

**If you score exactly on half-time, as the clock changes from 44-45 minutes the clock carries on until 90 minutes when half-time arrives. In the second half the clock goes onto 125 minutes and at that point it dissolves into little black and white squares and you can play for-ever, very useful if you are a goal or two behind.**

To tell the truth, Darren, I'm not surprised that the clock dissolves into nothingness if you're working it that hard. Sometimes I feel like doing that myself the way that I get overworked.




### SKYRANGER CODES

Do you remember what fun you had discovering the codes for Microsphere's *Wheelie* well now **JASON PARTINGTON** of Poole has come up with the goods for *Skyranger*.

The code for level 2 is **MAGIC**, for level 3 **PILOT**, for level 4 **STOMP**, for level 5 **PARIS**, for level 6 **EVENT**, level 7 (the one we already had for the review) **RECAP** and for level 8 **ALIBI**. Jason also offers these tips on the same game.

**One way of gaining points and saving fuel is to hover at a cross-roads and wait for a Watcher to approach. It also helps if you are near to a dead end, because they turn around and head back towards you.**

Also from Jason is a tip on how to make a mega car in *Battlecars*. You have to break into the program, **LIST 9700** then move the cursor to **LET MN = 3100** now change this to whatever amount you want.

### UNDERWURLDE CHEAT

**TONY REEVES** of Wigan phoned up to say how to get past the guardians in *Underwurlde* without the weapons. What you have to do is stand near the guardian and hold the DOWN key two creatures will come down and eventually you will be knocked past the guardian. Alternatively you can work up a good swing on a rope and when you are swinging really well let go of the rope and sometimes you will be knocked past the guardian, but all this takes a lot of practice. However when you have done it, it has the added advantage that the birds that usually come and pick you up are not there.

# PLAYING TIPS

### DECATHLON AND GOLF BALLS?

Here is a quick tip from **CRAIG COMON** of Essex on how to get quicker times on the running events in *Decathlon* without cheating.

**Select two keys adjacent to one another and to run use a golf ball on the keys by sliding it from side to side very quickly.**

The less said about that tip the better unless you really want to mash up your keyboard

### INFINITE LIVES FOR LAZY PEOPLE

For all you *Lazy Jones*'s out there here is a poke to give you infinite lives on the same game. It was sent in by **WILLIAM BRADLEY** of Putney.

**First MERGE the game then change LINE 335 to POKE 56693,0. Now type in GOTO 9999 and restart the tape.**

### HALLS BUG

This tip seems to have been hanging around for ages now. So I've finally decided to print it. It was sent in by **PAUL WADSWORTH** of York and it's for *Halls Of The Things*. Did you know it was partly programmed by a THING namely Simon Bratell.

**To get to the dungeon level on *Halls* without collecting any of the rings, you stand outside the dungeon door and press the 2 key at the same time as the BREAK key. The door opens and you can go to the dungeon level and collect the key to be victorious.**

### ZAXXON TIPS

*Zaxxon* the recently raleased game from U.S. Gold has stired up quite a few tips but this letter from **NEIL PEARSON** of Keighley seems to some them all up.

**When you are in deep space go as far right as possible and then down. If you have done this correctly only half of your ship is visible and no planes will shoot you or run into you.**

**To pass under the forcefields in the second asteroid city, fire a laser at the wall, watch where it explodes and then judge your height by the explosion.**

**When you reach the 'Zaxxon' you will find that there is an arm on its left hand side. To destroy the 'Zaxxon' you must shoot the hole in the arm three times**

### AVALON TIPS

*Avalon* seems to have proved very hard for some people while quite easy to others so **DEB DAS** of Mid-Glamorgan has sent in some tips on playing the game to us lesser mortals.

**The sword like object, found on levels below the gatehouse level, enables you to move certain objects like boulders etc which hide such things as scrolls.**

**In the location with the green bottle, somewhere in the Caverns of Doom, move the servant over the bottle which will give a key. With the servant move the key over the chest and it will open.**

**To get to the Great Halls of the Deep, an axe will have to be found, which is somewhere in the Mines of Madness or Caverns of Doom. It is hidden in a wall and it is rather difficult to notice, but persevere because it is vital. Once you have it then you must go through a door in the Caverns of Doom which leads to a tunnel, which in turn leads to a room with two doors. With the servant take the axe from Maroc's backpack and hit the chest in that room with it, the chest will open. Take the axe back to Maroc and move the servant to the chest where he will find a key, take the key back to Maroc. Go through the door opposite the one you came through and this will lead you to a location with two doors, one of which is locked. Also in this room are two yellow goblins. Use the servant to take the key from Maroc's back and take the key to the door which is locked, the door is now open. Give the key back to Maroc and go through this door, through the tunnel and you will be in the Great Halls of the Deep.**

**The key that you've just acquired can be exchanged with certain wizards for money which in turn can be exchanged for a small block. Give the block to Maroc and examine your spell list. Try it out it is very useful in tight spots.**

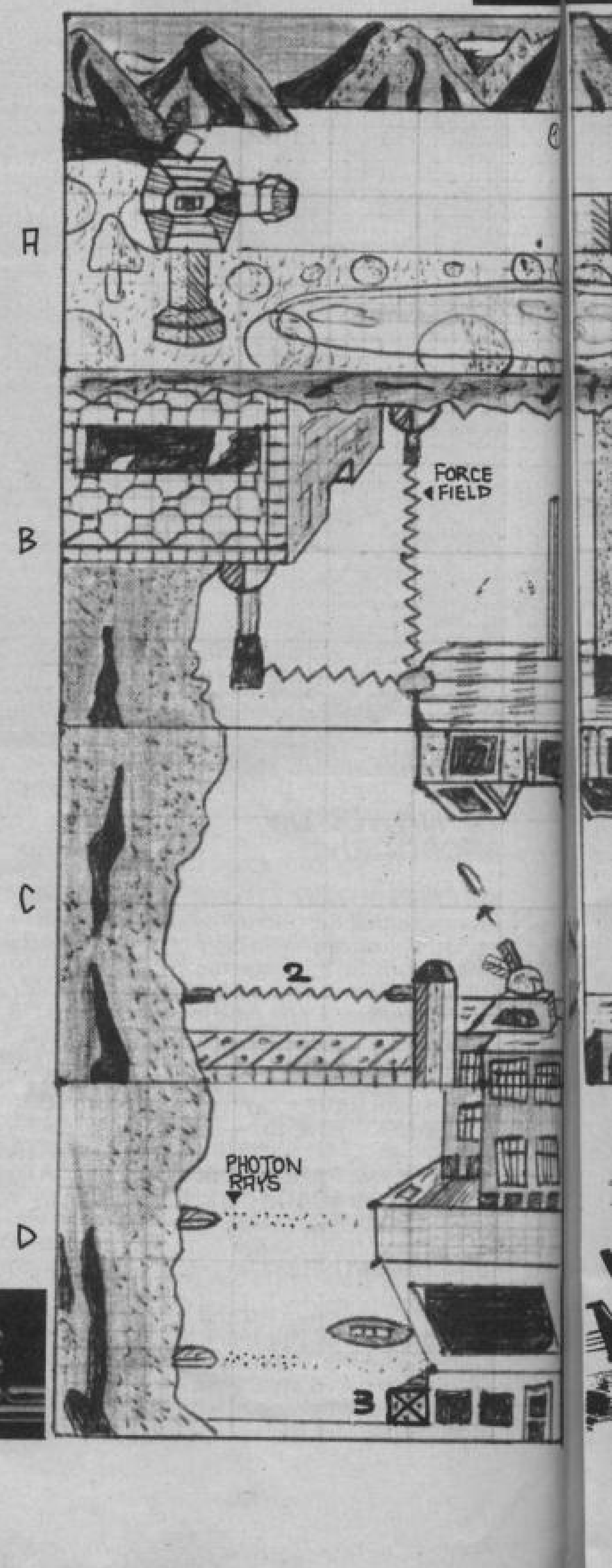
**On lower levels the 'unseen' spell can be very useful when surrounded by axemen and fireball throwing goblins.**

## AIRWOLF

## THE MAP

Pick up the scientist in D3, take him back to start – and gain an extra life.

Shooting Defence Control Boxes opens way to sections of the maze. (Box 1 controls section 1)




elite

### CODE BUSTERS

Several people have sent in account codes for *Ghostbusters* to give you more money so you can buy more equipment to catch those spine chilling ghosts, and here are just a few of them plus some tips.

First when the game asks for your name type in **S**, then when it asks for your account number input **20203002** and this will give you £24,000 (I wish someone would give that much to me).

This was sent in by **P. LAWRENCE** of Poole.

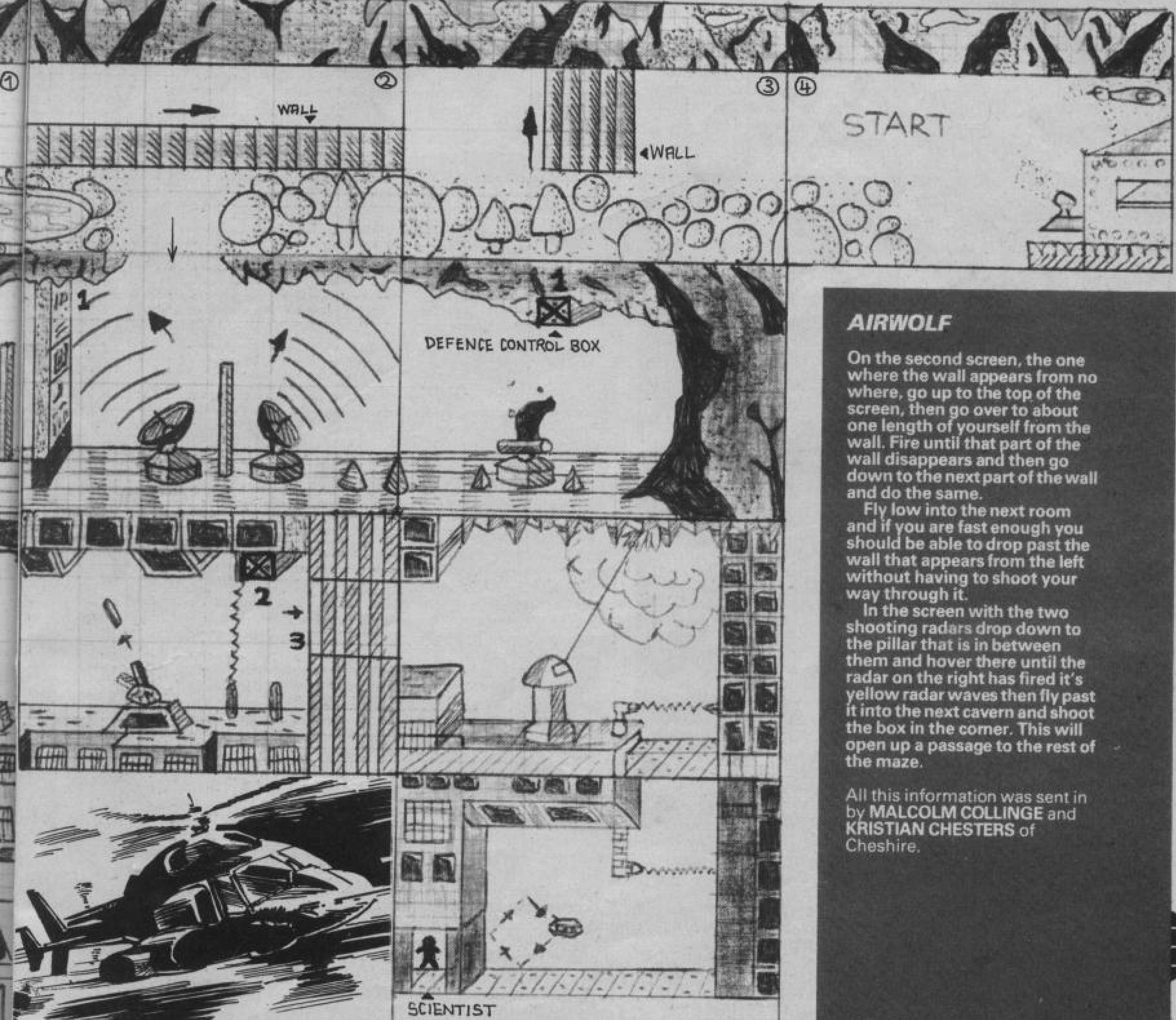
From **BILLY TANG** of Birmingham came these codes and tips.

**To get £93,600 enter TANG BILLY as your name then enter 15570011 as your account number. When you are playing a normal game, one with £10,000, buy the 1963 HEARSE, the MARSHMALLOW SENSOR, the IMAGE INTENSIFIER, the GHOST BAIT and as many traps as you can afford.**

### BOULDER DASH

**To get past screen / remove the plug from the left hand roof and step aside to avoid the falling rocks. Move down and rescue the diamonds from the adjoining passage. Then go into the right hand chamber and remove the plug and make your way back to chamber one where the landslide should have ceased. Rescue as many diamonds from this chamber as you can and then cut across the top of the screen to chamber two. You need to collect 75 jewels before making your way back to the exit which is next to where you started**




### AIRWOLF

**On the second screen, the one where the wall appears from no where, go up to the top of the screen, then go over to about one length of yourself from the wall. Fire until that part of the wall disappears and then go down to the next part of the wall and do the same.**

**Fly low into the next room and if you are fast enough you should be able to drop past the wall that appears from the left without having to shoot your way through it.**

**In the screen with the two shooting radars drop down to the pillar that is in between them and hover there until the radar on the right has fired it's yellow radar waves then fly past it into the next cavern and shoot the box in the corner. This will open up a passage to the rest of the maze.**

All this information was sent in by **MALCOLM COLLINGE** and **KRISTIAN CHESTERS** of Cheshire.

## *UNDERWURLDE POKES*

It is truly amazing how many people have spent hours over a hot Spectrum hacking away at *Underwurlde* and by some bizarre coincidence all of them except one have come up with the same program to give infinite lives. Yet stranger still is the fact that *Your Spectrum* managed to print something exactly the same. This must be the biggest coincidence since the *Titanic* sank while hitting an iceberg. Anyway here is that remarkable program.

First type in this program and save onto tape as a new header:

```
100 CLEAR 32000
110 FOR X = 32768 TO 32796
120 NEXT X
130 PRINT "START TAPE AND PRESS ANY KEY"
140 IF INKEY$ = "" THEN GOTO 140
150 RANDOMIZE USR 32768
160 DATA 221,33,12,128,17,17,0,175,205,194
170 DATA 4,201,0,175,66,85,83,84,69,82,83,32
180 DATA 32,13,4,0,128,217,3
```

Once the program has been saved on to tape then RUN and enter **RANDOMIZE USR 0** then **CLEAR 25000**. Now load the header back into the computer. When the header has loaded replace it with your *Underwurlde* tape. Listen to the tape unconnected to the computer, pause it just after the header signal. Plug the EAR lead back in. Now RUN your fake header and press play on the tape, pausing it when the ok message comes up. Now enter these pokes:

**POKE 24791,251: POKE 24792,207: RANDOMIZE USR 24740** and ENTER. Now type NEW and ENTER, then type in this program:

```
100 READ N
120 READ Y: POKE X,Y
130 NEXT X
140 RANDOMIZE USR 62374
```

Finally type in one of the following (only one can be used at a time):

**150 DATA 11, 62, 0, 50, 240, 231, 50, 244, 231, 195, 242, 103** — infinite lives

**150 DATA 8, 62, 0, 50, 199, 232, 195, 242, 103** — makes weapons appear in the same place each game

**150 DATA 11, 62, 0, 50, 153, 148, 50, 154, 148, 195, 142, 103** — stay immortal after finding a gem

All you have to do now is type in RUN and press ENTER then press play on tape.

## *STARSTRIKE — THE SECOND SCREEN*

*Starstrike* hasn't had that many tips yet so hopefully a bit more of the playing tips space will be devoted to this great game. Anyway these tips were sent in by **JAMES McMULLEN** of Cork.

**On the second screen, the one where you are flying over the planet's surface, you can avoid the enemy's plasma bolts by alternating your height. Fly as close to the surface as possible so when the bolts are fired at this level you just have to fly higher to avoid them, then when it gets hectic at that height just fly low again. Doing this saves a lot of your shield. You can also do this on the early stages of the trench but on the latter stages it gets a bit crowded in there!**

## *SAVE LIVES IN KNIGHT LORE*

Thanks to the efforts of **TIMOTHY EDMONDS** (and dad) of Grays, we can now save lots of life on Ultimate's *Knight Lore* with this poke for unlimited lives. First type in this program and save it to tape or microdrive:

```
5 CLEAR 61999
10 FOR J = 32768 TO 32789
20 READ A: POKE J,A
30 NEXT J
40 DATA 62, 97, 1, 172, 1, 33, 54, 95, 17, 48, 242, 174, 18, 11, 120, 177, 126, 19, 35, 32, 246, 201
```

Now proceed as follows: RUN this program then type LOAD "" and play the Knight Lore tape, hit CAPS SPACE together as soon as you hear the scale of beeps. Now enter each of the following: **RANDOMIZE USR 32768**
**NEW**
**POKE 62410,251**
**POKE 62411,201**
**RANDOMIZE USR 62374**
Restart the tape. When the game has loaded type in **POKE 53567,0** this gives you infinite lives. For infinite days enter **POKE 50206,0** then enter **RANDOMIZE USR 24832** to start the game.

On reading my column in last month's issue LLOYD MANGRAM complained about the over use of the word 'well'. WELL all I can say to that is I hope you enjoyed reading the column. Keep sending in all your tips and info to: **ROBIN CANDY, CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**

# *SPECTACLE — THE PASSWORDS!*

## A CRASH/LLOYD MANGRAM EXCLUSIVE FROM DESIGN DESIGN

**Ever since Design Design's space speedway game *Dark Star* was released, we have been getting letters and phonecalls begging for — and threatening dire retribution if we didn't give out — the passwords for the other program on the cassette called *SPECTACLE*. We couldn't do that because, like the rest of you, we didn't know the secret words and had failed to work them out. But after receiving a phonecall from a top secret location somewhere to the north of the Arndale Centre in Manchester, I can now exclusively reveal to the world the passwords that will gain you entry to Design Design's secret weapon.**

**The passwords are: *Everyone's a nervous wreck***

**Just type them in as written here and don't forget the apostrophe!**

My informant pretended to be anonymous, but the shy, retiring quality of his voice told me that this was no other than Big Simon Brattel making a spectacle of himself. He told me that to their knowledge no one had cracked the puzzle yet apart from one of their duplicators who had threatened to put out tapes with an added little BASIC program that would print the passwords up on screen. There were several clues contained in *Dark Star*, Simon told me. The words come from the chorus of a song by the American group SUPERTRAMP from their *Breakfast in America* album. It goes — 'Now run for cover when they discover, Everyone's a nervous wreck'. The song is called *Just another nervous wreck* and it can be found listed in one of *Dark Star*'s hi-score tables. Another clue was the hi-score listing CD3708, Simon told me, which is the compact disc album number. I checked my antique vinyl version which is numbered 63708.

**SPECTACLE isn't a game exactly, and I won't spoil anything by saying what it is, except that I can see why they told CRASH the answer first — most other magazines will be suing! Simon described the program as, 'Not a game, more a way of life. It's really weird, I couldn't think of anything to say about it. Sinclair once said the Spectrum could do teletext, which of course it couldn't. So we worked something out that would look like teletext and this is it. SPECTACLE is what kept us from going insane while we were working on *Dark Star*.' But then he added, 'When you see it, you'll probably think we're mad.' So obviously SPECTACLE failed!**

**The phone was then handed over to the other perpetrating programmer of SPECTACLE who described himself as 'the other Simon' who talked me through some of the program's low spots while Robin Candy punched the buttons on the Spectrum. I asked the other Simon if he had any hints or tips to give away exclusively to CRASH and he replied, 'I would like to extend my sympathies to anyone else who's been nicked by PC Woods on the M56 — signed *The Crew of the Black Astra*'**

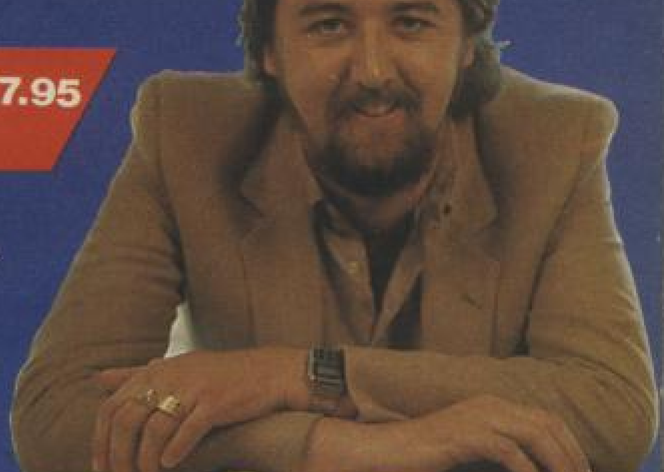
**Thanking him for this useful piece of information, I returned to Big Simon and asked him when the follow up to *Dark Star* was expected. It's called *Forbidden Planet* and Simon said it should be out June-ish and described it as, 'Dark Star but with a game in it.' I then assured Simon on behalf of Roger Kean that we were printing an apology for referring to the Design Design team as 'human beings' in an article, and he said that in that case they would cancel the writ for libel against us; and on that happy note the connection was cut. When I told Robin who had been on the phone he said of Big Simon, 'Oh, he's the one who's logical, presentable, respectable, a vegetable. . . .'**

# THE WAITING IS OVER!

## The long awaited follow-up to FOOTBALL MANAGER by KEVIN TOMS is now available

# SOFTWARE STAR

**Available NOW for** SPECTRUM 48K £6.95 COMMODORE 64 £7.95 AMSTRAD CPC 464 £7.95



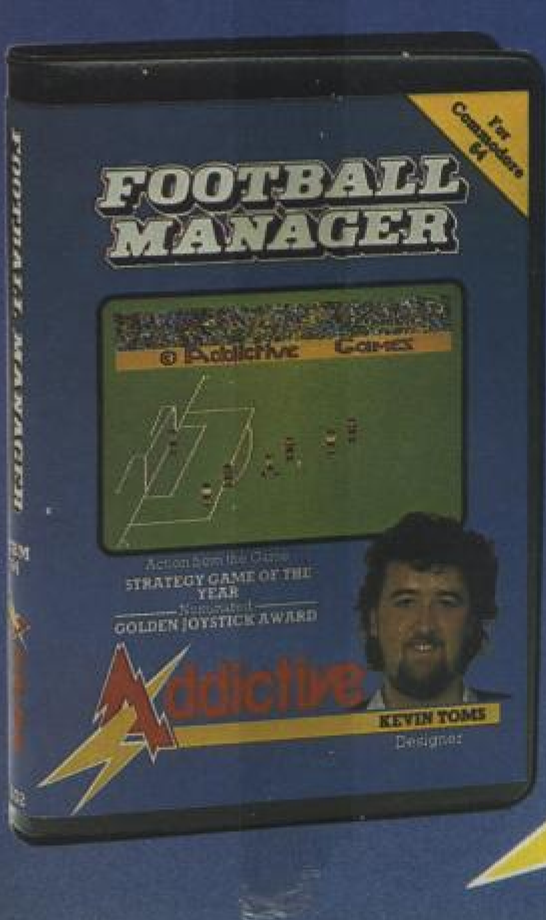
SOFTWARE STAR is the NEW game from Kevin Toms, who designed the Software Classic – FOOTBALL MANAGER. SOFTWARE STAR allows *you* to try your hand at running a successful software company. You have to cope with staff problems, game launches, advertising, financial problems and more while trying to produce chart topping successful games. One other thing, SOFTWARE STAR has that *gripping* Addictive quality that all Kevin's games have!

---

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## by KEVIN TOMS




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**"Completely fantastic – I want one!"** – *Charlie Nicholas, Arsenal sriker in Big K, April 1984*

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ADDICTIVE GAMES




# Lloyd Mangram's HALL of SLIME




**The Hobbit** completed at 97%
**Stop the Express** done at 7,073
**Dangermouse in DT** saved world 3 times
**War of the Worlds** 67%
**Daniel Hall, Paul and Philip Harris, Catford, London**

**Pogo** 66,500
**TLL** 9150
**H.E.R.O.** 54,710
**Trashman 2** 4,954
**Dark Star** 19,840 and 14 planets
**Simon Harrison, Coalville, Leics.**

**Blade Alley** 720,490 on L68
**Deathchase** 187,000 on L68
**Thrusta** 109,000 on L122
**Wild West Hero** 134,750 on L25
**Penetrator** 2,002,930 on L410
**Ad Astra** 64,720
**Beach Head** 140,600
**Hunchback** 2,316,400 on L96
**Trashman 2** 18,323, 10 countries
**Dark Star** 13,500, 22 planets
**Jonathon Strudwick (14), Kettering, Northants**
*Jonathon's Mum got 38,625 on FRED on L4*

**Pogo** 63,990
**Cavelon** 42,900
**Chuckie Egg** 436,280 on L35
**Skool Daze** 4,330
**Pinball Wizard** 23,483
**Richard Mellor, Oldham, Lancs.**

**Starstrike** 1,223,900 on Easy
**Sabre Wulf** 270,100 at 100%
**Pogo** 93,000
**Alex Barnett (14), Belsize Park, London NW3**

**Tribble Trubble** 28,750
**Bugaboo** 1m. 27s.
**Ad Astra** 32,170 in 17m. 56s.
**Pogo** 53,275
**Penetrator** 3,153,055
**Chuckie Egg** 256,350 on L24
**Pyjamarama** 67%
**Factory Breakout** 39,750 on Epsilon
**Eskimo Eddie** 48,000
**Kevin Dominey, Poole, Dorset**

**Kung Fu** black belt and 480
**Frank N. Stein** L13
**Jeremy Tsang, Liverpool**

**Stop the Express** 10,650
**Pheenix** 53,455
**Moon Alert** 24,980 stage T
**Ad Astra** 35,580 in 18m. 51s.
**Wild West Hero** 89,625 wave 19
**Fred** 19,300 L2
**Sabre Wulf** 158,370 at 94%
**Michael Roland (15), Bad Salzuflen, West Germany**

**Ah Diddums** Box 27
**Cavelon** 367,229
**Stop the Express** 82,019
**Martin Sutton, Stockport, Cheshire**

**One thing emerges clearly from the letters coming in for the Hall of Slime — the most popular hi-score game at the moment is still *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*, so I'll just do a section for that alone. . . .**

**DALEY THOMPSON'S DECATHLON**

**Andrew Pollard (15), Saffron Walden, Essex:**
100m: 9.06; LJ: 11.76; SP: 33.90; HJ: 2.45; 400m: 28.8; 110m H: 9.81; PV: 6.04; Disc: 75.90; Jav: 132.45; 1500m: 4:12.76; Day 1 344,075; Day 2 605,435

**Daniel Hall and Paul Harris, Catford, London SE6**
100m: 8.73; LJ 10.96; SP: 30.78; HJ: 2.45; 400m: 30.03; 110m H: 9.58; PV: 5.03; Disc: 82.52; Jav: 132.79; 1550m: 4:20.26; Day 1 364,428; Day 2 578,882

**Phil Hollowell, Wallington, Surrey**
100m: 9.42; LJ: 9.18; SP: 26.52; HJ: 2.45; 400m: 30.32; 110m H: 10.11; PV: 4.80; Disc: 75.90; Jav: 90.95; 1500m: 4:29.80; Day 1 354,998; Day 2 401,709

**Jeremy Tsang, Liverpool**
100m: 9.96; LJ: 10.31; SP: 25.08; HJ: 2.45; 400m: 34.12; 110m H: 12.37; PV: 5.03; Disc: 75.90; Jav: 111.91; 1500m: 4:41.25; Day 1 231,318; Day 2 341,435

**Mark Spiden, Haddington, East Lothian**
100m: 8.44; LJ: 11.01; SP: 26.50; HJ: 2.46; 400m: 28.50; 110m H: 10.04; PV: 5.04; Disc: 75.90; Jav: 120.19; 1500m: 4:43:28; Day 1 357,928; Day 2 617,797

**Mugsy** 70.39%
**H.E.R.O.** 67,580
**Match Point** beaten computer on quarter and semi finals
**Antics** rank 4
**Harrier Attack** 24,520
**Combat Lynx** 1400 in 21 **Paul Burnett, Oakwood Park, Leeds**

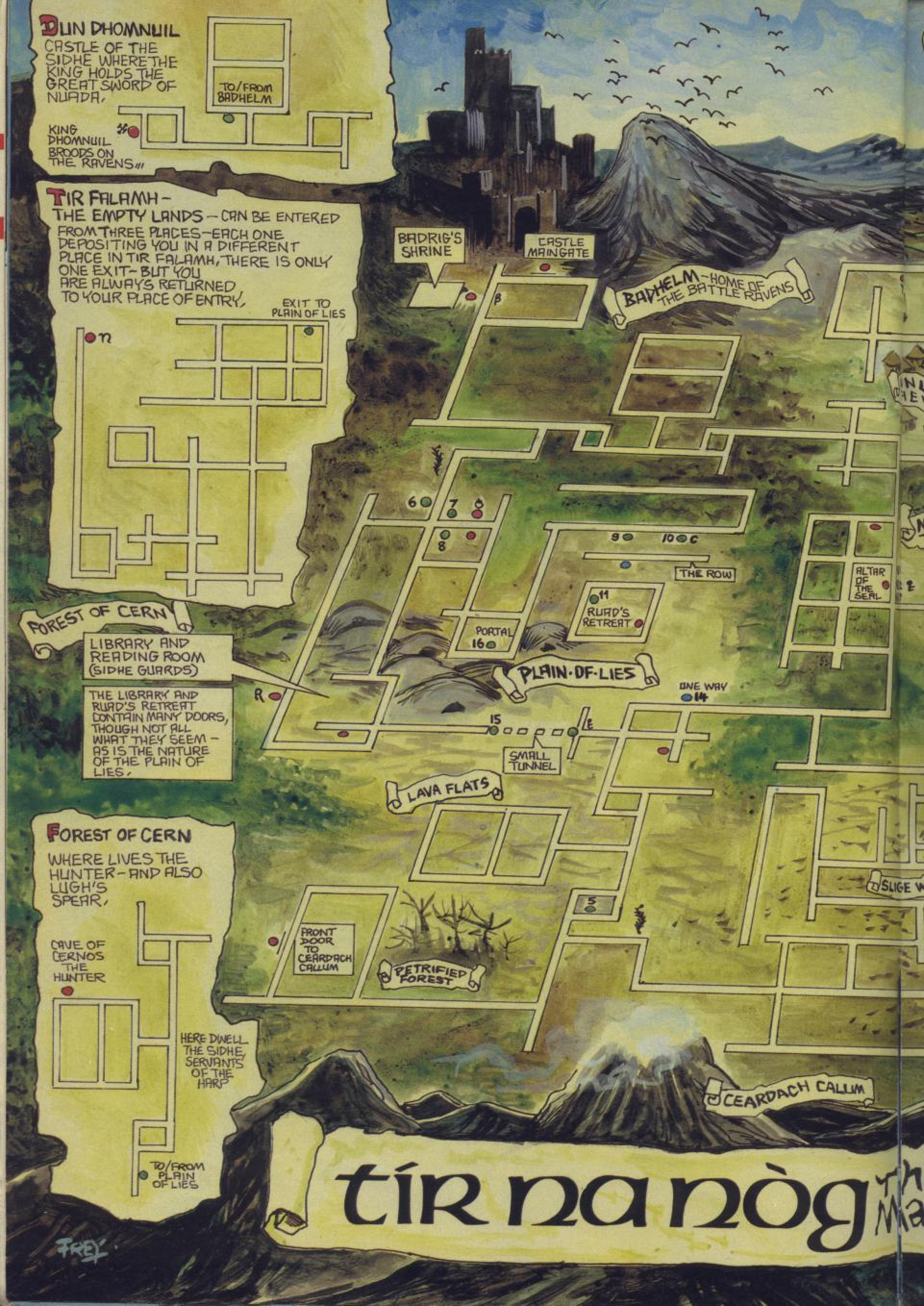
**Psytraxx** 5,935 with 4 parts
**Beach Head** 105,000 completed
**Michael Ramsden, Barnsley, S. Yorks.**

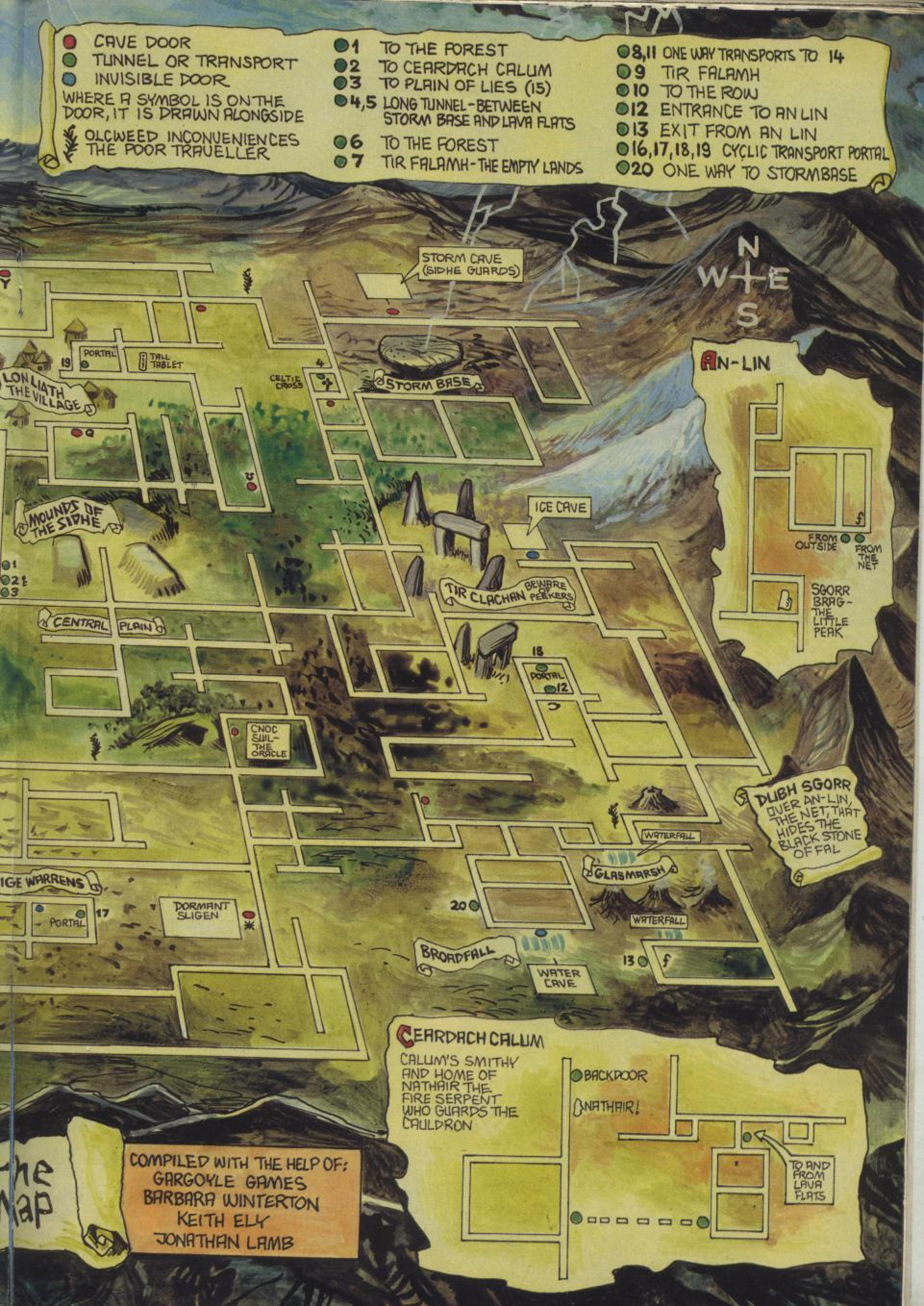
**Atic Atac** 98% in 16m. 17s.
**Chequered Flag** Cambridge Ring 52.72s
**Pogo** 63,095
**Pssst** 101,980
**Tariq Mustapha, Battersea, London SW11**

**And that just about fills us up for this month. I'm struggling to convince dash Ed to allow more space on a regular basis, because he thinks the Hall of Slime is a bit boring and full of liars anyway (which I know it isn't — hmmmm . . .). But to make it visually more lively it would help if you all sent in pics of yourselves, then I could show him how unboring it will look. I know some of you have been sending them in, but nowhere near enough. So, no excuses now, send those mug shots in with your scores and then the Hall may expand again into the Valley.**
**LM**

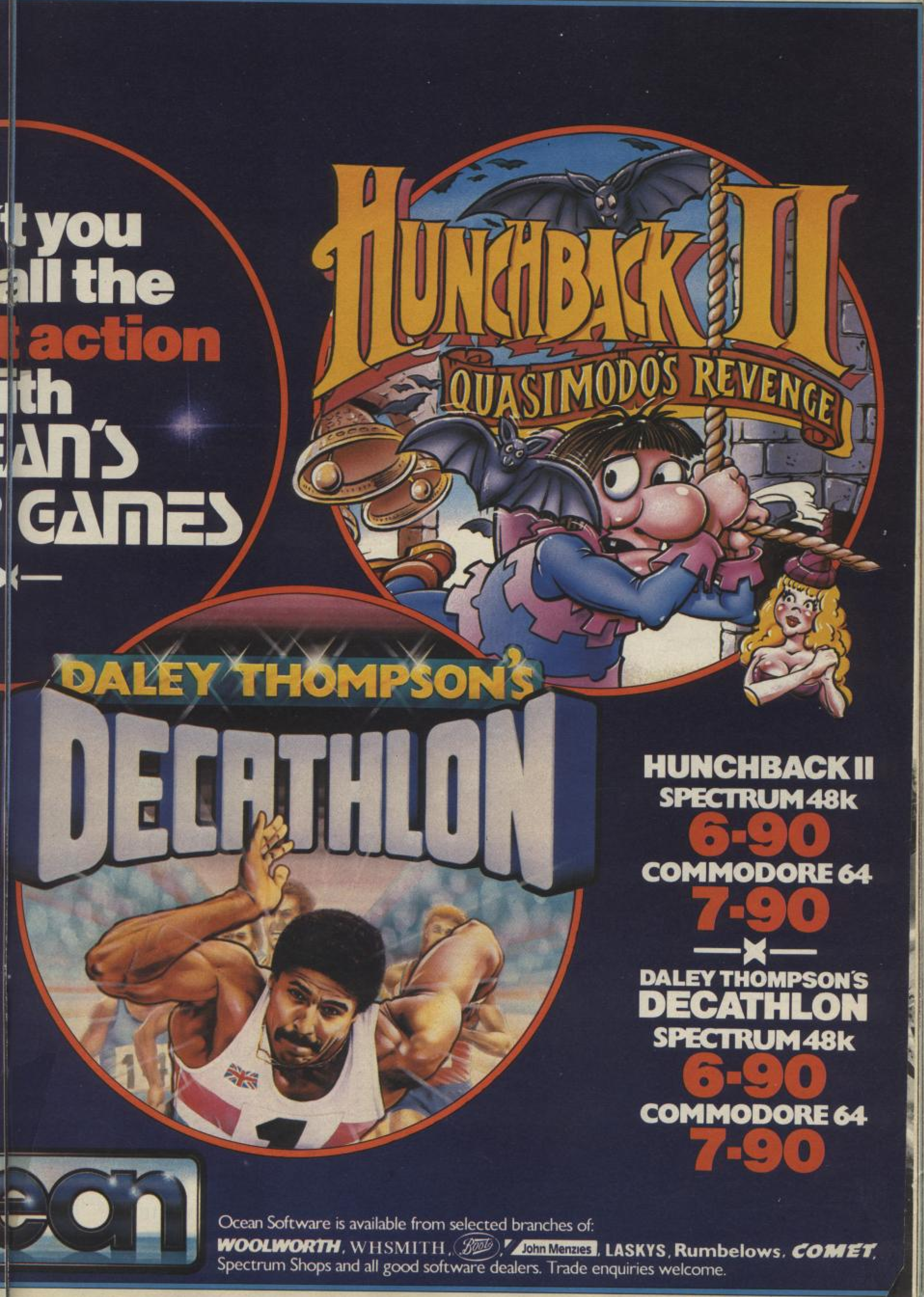



KOMPLEX


DUN DHOMNUIL
CASTLE OF THE SIDHE WHERE THE KING HOLDS THE GREAT SWORD OF NUADA.
TO/FROM BADHELM
KING DHOMNUIL BROODS ON THE RAVENS...
TIR FALAMH - THE EMPTY LANDS - CAN BE ENTERED FROM THREE PLACES - EACH ONE DEPOSITING YOU IN A DIFFERENT PLACE IN TIR FALAMH, THERE IS ONLY ONE EXIT - BUT YOU ARE ALWAYS RETURNED TO YOUR PLACE OF ENTRY.
EXIT TO PLAIN OF LIES
BADRIG'S SHRINE
CASTLE MAINGATE
BADHELM - HOME OF THE BATTLE RAVENS
THE ROW
RUAD'S RETREAT
ALTAR OF THE SEAL
FOREST OF CERN
LIBRARY AND READING ROOM (SIDHE GUARDS)
PORTAL
PLAIN OF LIES
ONE WAY
THE LIBRARY AND RUAD'S RETREAT CONTAIN MANY DOORS, THOUGH NOT ALL WHAT THEY SEEM - AS IS THE NATURE OF THE PLAIN OF LIES.
SMALL TUNNEL
LAVA FLATS
FOREST OF CERN
WHERE LIVES THE HUNTER - AND ALSO LUGH'S SPEAR.
CAVE OF CERNOS THE HUNTER
FRONT DOOR TO CEARDACH CALLUM
PETRIFIED FOREST
HERE DWELL THE SIDHE, SERVANTS OF THE HARP
TO/FROM PLAIN OF LIES
CEARDACH CALUM
TÍR NA NÒG
FREY


CAVE DOOR
TUNNEL OR TRANSPORT
INVISIBLE DOOR
WHERE A SYMBOL IS ON THE DOOR, IT IS DRAWN ALONGSIDE
OLCWEED INCONVENIENCES THE POOR TRAVELLER
1 TO THE FOREST
2 TO CEARDACH CALUM
3 TO PLAIN OF LIES (15)
4,5 LONG TUNNEL - BETWEEN STORM BASE AND LAVA FLATS
6 TO THE FOREST
7 TIR FALAMH - THE EMPTY LANDS
8,11 ONE WAY TRANSPORTS TO 14
9 TIR FALAMH
10 TO THE ROW
12 ENTRANCE TO AN LIN
13 EXIT FROM AN LIN
16,17,18,19 CYCLIC TRANSPORT PORTAL
20 ONE WAY TO STORMBASE
N
W
E
S
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# CRASHTIONNAIRE 85

It is now one year since we last ran a Readers' Questionnaire about **CRASH**. The last one provided us with enormously helpful information about what you, the readers, think about **CRASH**, what you enjoy and what you dislike. The last Questionnaire in April 1984 was entirely responsible, for instance, in deciding us to leave **CRASH** as a Spectrum-only magazine. As before, it is vital that as many readers as possible fill in this Questionnaire and return it to us. If you don't want to cut out the page then a photocopy will be acceptable or even a written list, as long as you lay the answers out clearly to fit the questions.

As we did last year, all the names and addresses returned will go into the bag to be drawn for a fabulous first prize of £60 worth of software, plus a CRASH Sweatshirt. The three runners-up will each receive £12 worth of software and a CRASH T-shirt, and all four winners will receive a three-month subscription to CRASH (or have their existing subscription extended by three months).

Forms will be accepted for the draw up until last post **5th April 1985** and the results will be published shortly afterwards.

Some of the questions asked are repeats of ones which appeared in the former **CRASHTIONNAIRE**, but some are new ones. Let's see how your opinions have changed!

***Once again, help us help you and have the chance of winning a fabulous software prize!***

## SECTION A PERSONAL

**1a** What is your age?

**4a** Do you buy CRASH

Every month/Occasionally/Read someone's

**5a** This excludes CRASH. Please tick the other computer titles you buy regularly.

- Sinclair User
- Sinclair Programs
- Computer & Video Games
- Your Computer
- Your Spectrum
- Games Computing/Computer Gamer
- Popular Computing Weekly
- Popular Computer News
- Home Computing Weekly
- Popular Computer World
- Which Micro
- What Micro
- ZX Computing
- List any others....

**6a** Including CRASH, how do you rate the magazines you buy regularly out of 100:

Your rating:

## SECTION B CRASH & REVIEWS

**1b** Has reading CRASH influenced recent games purchasing?

Yes/No/Sometimes

**2b** If **'Yes'** to 1b, on actually playing a new game have you agreed with the CRASH review

always/most/half/hardly ever?

**3b** Do you think the reviews should be

Longer/Shorter/OK as they are

**4b** Do you think the reviews should be

More detailed/Less/OK as they are?

**5b** Do you like to have a review rating system?

Yes/No/Don't Know

**6b** Do you think the present CRASH rating system is

Excellent/Good/Average/Poor

**7b** Against other magazines, are CRASH reviews

Better/Same/Worse?



## SECTION C CRASH — GENERAL

**1c** We would like to know what you consider important in CRASH. Below are 20 headings in alphabetical order. Please write a figure beside each heading starting with 1 (most important) and ending with 20 (least important)

- Adventure Trail
- Advertisers Index
- Adverts
- Arcade games reviews etc
- Comic strips
- Competitions
- Contents Page
- Crash Forum
- Editorial Page(s)
- Frontline
- Games Reviewed Index
- General articles
- Hall of Slime
- Hardware articles
- Hotline Charts
- News Input
- Programmer profiles
- Signpost
- Software previews
- Utility articles

**2c** Do you vote for the Hotline Chart?

Every month/Occasionally/No

**3c** Do you vote for the Adventure Chart

Every month/Occasionally/No

**4c** If you vote for either chart do you

Phone/Write/Both?

**5c** Tick the words below you think best describes the CRASH Hotline Charts in comparison to other and national sales charts

- Better
- More Fair
- Relevant
- Different
- Irrelevant
- Less Fair
- Worse

**6c** Do you like the Lunar Jetman comic strip?

Yes/No/Not bothered

**7c** Did you like the Terminal Man comic strip?

Yes/No/Not bothered

**8c** Have you written to the CRASH Forum

More than twice/Twice/Once/Never

**9c** Do you find the Playing Tips section

Valuable/Useless/Interesting but never use them?

**10c** Do you find the games maps

Valuable/Useless/Interesting but never use them?

**11c** Moving onto Competitions, are there

Too many/Not enough/About right?

**12c** And the General Articles and Features, are they

Too long/Too short/About right?

**13c** Do you find Signpost

Valuable/Useless/Interesting but never use it?

**14c** What area of CRASH would you like to see expanded?

- Adventure Trail
- Frontline
- Crash Course
- Reviews
- Profiles on programmers
- Profiles on Software Houses
- News
- Playing Tips
- Signpost
- Forum
- Hardware/Utility articles
- Hall of Slime

**15c** How many people read your copy of CRASH that you know do not buy their own copy?

**16c** Should CRASH have program listings like other magazines (excluding Playing Tips)?

Yes/No

**17c** Do CRASH reviews influence your decision to buy a game?

Yes/No/Sometimes




**When you have filled out the questionnaire, don't forget to write down your name and address. Please write clearly, preferably printing. These coupons will be used for the Super Draw.**

Name ____________________

Address ____________________

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Postcode ____________________

I am a subscriber to CRASH □

I am not a subscriber to CRASH □

Return the completed form as soon as possible to:
**CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**

# LETTERS




**They've given me a bigger desk at last! But no reflection on my worth, merely a move around so that upstart Robin Candy could have my old one. Unfortunately, he's not as tidy as I am, and is now spreading like a plague all over the floor area adjacent. As I only spend a few days in the CRASH office (preferring to write in the quiet of my cottage) Robin uses my new desk as well. I know Playing Tips are considered important, but really. . . .**

**Anyway, on to the business in hand. The letter I picked for this month's £12 of software was chosen for its pertinent breakdown on what could be said to be wrong with the CRASH review ratings system.**

## A FARCE . . . ?

Dear Lloyd,
I am a keen Spectrum owner, and I like to buy games I will enjoy. Very few of our local shops will allow software to be played on the premises, so the best way for me to get an idea of which games are good is to read your reviews.

Your magazine appears to carry the best kind — they are by far the biggest, and the most critical, having a percentage rating instead of marks out of ten. On closer examination, however, I found this marking scheme to be a complete farce. The six 'different' marks never seem to vary by more that 5 or 6%. It is obvious that you decide whether a game is good, bad or average and then give every game in a category the same mark. This can be very misleading, and proves disappointing.

If your team decides that a game is excellent, then why not give it 98% for addictiveness? Fair enough, but why must they then say the graphics are 'small but suitable' for instance, and give them 90%. An example of this is *Boulderdash* by Front Runner. I consider it to be the most addictive game I own, and agree heartily with 98% for addictiveness. I was shocked when I saw the graphics for the first time, however. They were small and pretty, yes, but 90%? No Way! At the risk of seeming negative, I would also say that *Knight Lore* takes at least two weeks to get in to; 90% playability is silly.

We don't need you to lie, just to boost the Overall percentage a game gets. I'd much rather see you give 90% for graphics and 20% for addictive qualities to a game which deserves such a rating — *Blue Thunder* perhaps — so those looking only for pretty pictures will be satisfied. This would be better than lying about the addictivity, so the game seems addictive overall, which disappoints the fun-loving gamester.
**Mark Willis, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire**

*There are some very good points here, Mark. For what it is worth I feel the Overall rating should no longer be a strict average of the previous five ratings as it can be misleading, and I am campaigning for a change.* Boulderdash *is a good example of the problem the averaging out can cause, since giving it a low Graphics rating would obviously have knocked the Overall on the head and put people off buying what I think is a truly wonderful game. Having said that I must point out that because three different people give their ratings independently for a game it often works out as swings and roundabouts on the individual rating figures, which is why they can turn out within a few percent of each other. But you are not really correct in saying that most reviews' ratings are within 5-6%, there is often more variation than that. As to a high Playability rating for* Knight Lore, *don't forget that the reviewers may well play a game they especially like very hard and for some while, by which time it is hard to remember how confusing it may have been to start. And besides which I thought* Knight Lore *was massive fun to play whether I knew what was happening immediately or not!*
**LM**

## EVERYONE'S A CRITIC

Dear CRASH,
It was interesting to read in issue 12 of the ins and outs when criticising games in your reviews. I once edited a SF magazine, and had my share of trouble when turning down stuff that wasn't up to a certain standard. Generally, a letter was sent to the author with his manuscript saying why it had been rejected, along with a list of suggestions that, if followed, would bring the article up to standard.

Unfortunately, what most people forget is that despite the fact that they might like their article, in writing for a magazine they are not writing for themselves.

In the same way, the people who write computer games are not just writing for themselves — they are writing these things so that they can become rich from the sales.

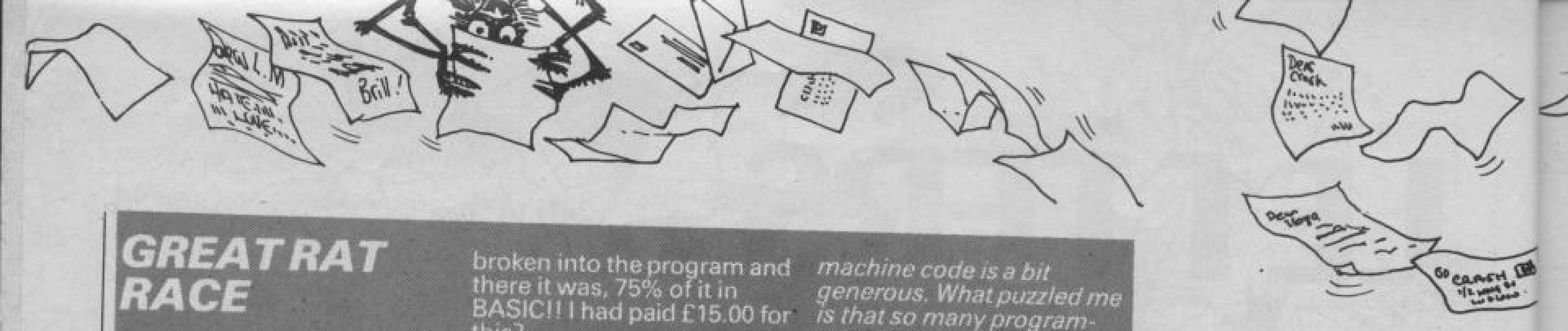
The customers are the ones who count. They are the ones who complain when bugs appear in games; they are the ones who refuse to buy a game that they think is over-priced or just plain bad. The customers are the critics.

So the next time a software firm decides not to place an advert in CRASH because you did not give them a good review, just point out that there are people walking the streets who have a similar opinion to CRASH reviewers and who arrived at that opinion completely independently. Perhaps that software company would like to boycott those critics — perhaps by not making any games for them.

Silly, isn't it. No-one should dislike constructive criticism. It should only make them try harder the next time.
**Brian, Sheffield, South Yorkshire**

*Maybe I'm a weather-beaten old cynic, but I guess no-one likes constructive criticism because that's the sort that hurts. Destructive criticism is upsetting but easily dismissed. An argument I have heard put forward more than once is the one that says 'this programmer put six months of his life into this game and your reviewers slaughtered it in three short paragraphs', implying that one doesn't care. If only they saw the anguish we go through when a game turns out badly! But the reviewers just come in with cassette and report form saying 'oh that's a load of rubbish'. End of discussion!*

*The next reader obviously agreed 100% with the CRASH reviewers.*
**LM**



## GREAT RAT RACE

Dear Lloyd,
I would like to express my deepest sympathy for the Legend programmers, they must be ex-ZX80 programmers. I decided to buy *The Great Space Race* after seeing the very stylish box and having heard that Legend had spent a quarter of a million pounds on making it. I don't think *PCG* would even print it as a listing!

Sure, the box has superb graphics, the program has amazing sound and brilliant animation — it's just a pity about the game. The game is about as exciting as *Voyage into the Unknown* and as good value for money as *Kosmic Pirate*. In fact, the game stinks. (No, I didn't flush it down the toilet — I wanted to keep the beautiful box). Anyway, after three hours of laughing at how bad it was I pressed the BREAK key in frustration, and guess what? Yes, you've got it, I'd broken into the program and there it was, 75% of it in BASIC!! I had paid £15.00 for this?

I phoned the Samaritans but they were engaged. I was going mad. I even wished I had a Commodore, but then I remembered that *The Great Space Race* was out for the 64 as well. When I recovered, I was extremely angry, and if I have anything to do with it, Legend will really become a Legend, a dim memory, a thing of the past...

Anyway, I have recovered a bit now, and would like to ask you what happened to 'Crash Back'. I thought it was very interesting. Before I finish, I must just say a thank you to Ultimate for two great games: *Knight Lore* and *Underwurlde* — and I can't wait for *Alien 8*.
**Jonathan Habrovitsky, Glasgow**

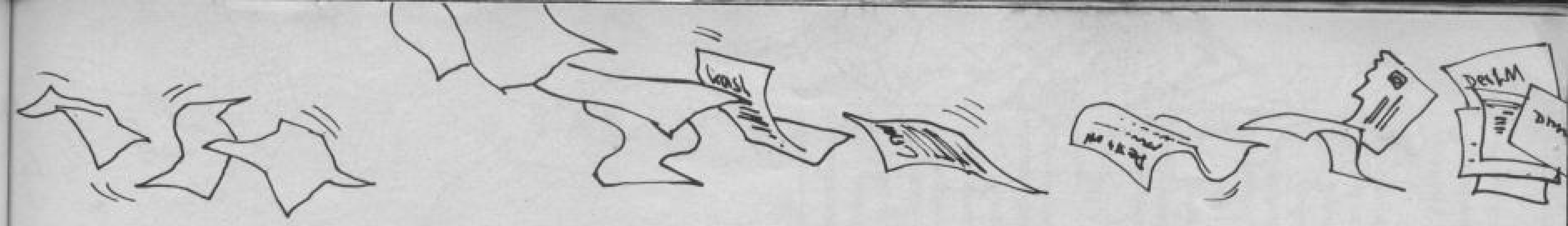
*Is this what you call 'constructive' criticism?! We, too, were a bit shocked to see all that BASIC, in fact I think your estimate of 25% machine code is a bit generous. What puzzled me is that so many programmers were credited with doing the game — were none of them capable assembly language programmers?*
**LM**

## COST OF WINNING

Dear Lloyd,
Regarding your comment about not mixing up mail-order items with letters, tips, subscriptions etc, and asking for such things to be sent separately — should I send competition entries separately to stand more chance of having my entries included?

As I enter all your competitions, it would cost about 90 pence on average to send them separately. What should I do?
**R Kelso, Sevenoaks, Kent**

*No, the point is simply one of administration at this end. You could send, for instance, in one envelope a letter to Derek Brewster, a playing tip to Robin Candy, a letter to me and six (or whatever) competition entries. BUT the important bit is that each item should be separate and clearly marked within the envelope. However, it is NOT a good idea to enclose anything for Mail Order or magazine subscriptions, which should be sent in a separate envelope, because the two departments are not in the same place and editorial mail may not get opened for a few days after its arrival. A final point is that it makes life easier if anything to do with competitions is kept separate from letters, tips etc, but if it's a question of cost you can send everything in one envelope. Is that as clear as mud?*
**LM**



## INDEED THE INDEX

Dear Lloyd,
Did you or did you not say that you would send an index with the 1984 binder in January? January will soon be coming to a close, and I ain't seen no index. Is there something wrong? Is the CRASH service getting bad? I don't believe it.

Well, leaving that subject, I'd like to know what's the difference between an Issue 1, Issue 2 and Issue 3 Spectrum. Mine's an Issue 3.
**Steven Jarman, Newtown, Powys**

*Er...yes we did, and No, I haven't a clue. Answered? Seriously though, Steven. The Index is a weensy bit late — not much, just a bit. I'm told it should be going to the printers soon. I know Franco Frey (whose responsibility it is) had a John Bull printing kit from his mummy and daddy for Christmas (his review of it will probably appear next month), so we should be seeing it very soon. Ahem. Basically, the series 1,2 and 3 Spectrums can be recognised by the similarity of their casings, which was a fiendishly cunning Sinclair trick to disguise the fact that although software was supposed to be compatible between all of the series, it sort of wasn't exactly. The main differences were hardware configurations, there was a change of PCB between the 1 and 2 series, and between 2 and 3 there were changes which resulted in keys being differently read which caused some software problems at the time. If you have a series 3 then you are the best off!*
**LM**

## DEVIL-SPAWNED

Dear Lloyd,
I thought that after one year I would at last put pen to paper. The main reason for this being the advent of that devil-spawned device, Hyper Load.

After happily loading games from a cheap cassette recorder for over a year now I suddenly have problems. Three games I bought in a row — *Decathalon, Knight Lore* and *Underwurlde* — have all failed to load at all. The only remedy for this was to make a tape copy from an ordinary cassette recorder onto a HiFi recorder adjusting the recording level manually.

This surely invalidates the claim that it helps prevent pirate copies. It is my opinion that all software with Hyper Load should have the legend in red letters: 'Danger, Hyper Load — Keep Off' as it sometimes takes many times longer to load than any normal game.

Next moan (yawn) why, when offering 100 copies of a game as prizes do the questions to be answered always consist of how many screens etc has that game got? Surely, to answer these questions one must already own the game, so what's the point?
**Dave Bancroft, Sheerness, Kent**

*I refer you to my long screed last month about Hyper Load, not that I'm saying you're wrong to complain. It is essential that companies insisting on using Hyper Load should batch check more thoroughly, because Hyper Load is going to give more problems if the quality control isn't perfect.*

*As to your last point, Dave, there has never been a competition which asked such a question without there being the printed answer somewhere within instant reach, such as a review on the previous page. So no, you don't already have to own the game. Yawn.*
**LM**

## NEVER AGAIN!

Dear Lloyd,
While reading your letters page in the Christmas Special, I came across the letter by D Blasbery who complained of having spent £7.95 on *Pyjamarama* instead of £6.95. Well, I've had the same problem — while on a shopping trip to Southampton I entered the shop called 'Boots' (never to be done again). I was intent on buying a computer game. I had only just got my Spectrum and was not buying copies of CRASH then, so I didn't know what game to buy.

Well, after some thought I decided to buy *Kong* by Ocean. I paid £7.95 for it and at the time it didn't occur to me that it might be too expensive. I went home happily, only to have the smile wiped off my face when I saw a mate's copy of *Kong*, which he had bought for £5.95. I had been done!

Not very pleased, I wrote a letter to Ocean complaining of the price difference. This paid off. Two weeks later I had a parcel from Ocean containing a copy of *Mr Wimpy* and a letter of apology that said the matter had been taken up with the shop.

The moral of this story is not to let price differences go amiss and choose your games carefully and check the price. Don't let your pocket money (if you get any) be spent on something over-priced.
**John Leal, Havenstreet, Isle of Wight.**

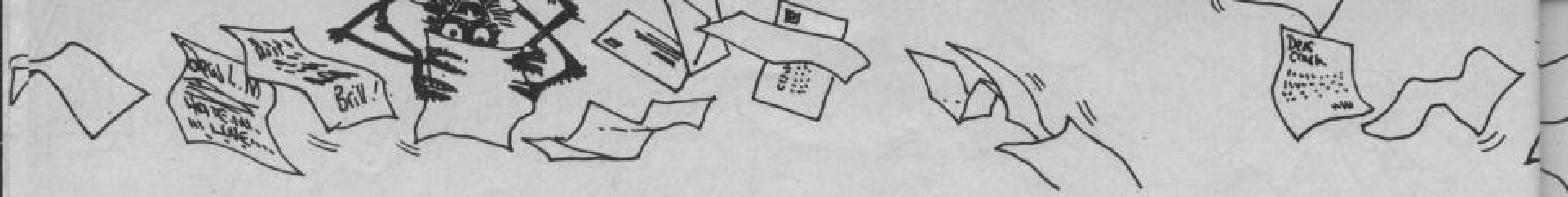
*I've got news for your friend. He was done as well, because in those days all Ocean prices were £5.90 not £5.95*
**LM**

## STITCHED UP

Dear Lloyd
Please, please, please tell me why your magazine refuses to fall apart. I buy three mags a month: CRASH, *PCG* and *C&VG*. The other two fall apart the day I buy them, but yours stays intact, forever!

By the way, do you know that *PCG* dared to suggest that your fab mag will join up with two other mags to combat their sales figures. This is supposed to happen on May 26.
**Stephen Williamson, Newtownabbey, N.Ireland**

*You must be lucky, Stephen, my copy always falls to bits! I'm afraid the last laugh doesn't go to PCG in this case, though, as their last pages have just fallen apart.*
**LM**



## SKOOL WAZE

Dear Lloyd,
I just thought I'd put pen to paper on a matter that has been intriguing me for some time. Why is it that BBC microcomputers are used in schools and not Spectrums? BBCs cost more than Spectrums, have less memory, but more importantly, so many people have Spectrums while not many people have BBCs at home.

Schools are often complaining that they do not have enough money to fund things like computer clubs etc, so I can't see why they then go out and spend £400 on one BBC when they could buy a Spectrum, a microdrive unit, printer and other hardware for the same money.

So please Lloyd, could you bring me out of the dark on this matter.
**Simon Aylward, Enfield, London**

*I think this is a historical thing really Simon. When schools started taking computers seriously the BBC looked attractive (from their point of view). It was fairly large sized (looks real), had a proper keyboard (for fumble fingers), not too much memory (wouldn't answer teacher back), had hardly any games software support (sounds serious), but most importantly it was called the BBC (sounds important, and aren't they the people who do all those schools telly programmes)?*

*Quite frankly I think it's had its day, as many teachers may well be realising now. But educational departments are rather like dinosaurs — when you cut off their tails it takes a year for the message to reach the brain, and another year for the brain to tell the tail to wag to see if it's still there.*
**LM**



## SKOOL DAZE

Dear Lloyd,
I read CRASH every month, but I think its influence is affecting my schoolwork. I bought my CRASH Christmas Special on the way to school and was desperate to read it. Then DURING THE AFTERNOON, I HAD MY CHANCE.

Yes, my French teacher was away, and the substitute teacher set us a load of reading to do. So me and two of my friends got our our CRASHES and started reading them behind our French books.

Then Disaster struck. My friend Neil started having hysterics over the picture of a naked lady on the poster that came with the magazine and some stupid girl in our class went and creeped on us.

'Please sir, I cannot tell a lie but Richard's reading his computer magazine' (Where have I heard that before). I nearly fainted — WHY ME? I was made to stand in front of the class and read out a French story. But my 'friends' started showing me this picture of the naked lady and I burst out laughing. Then the same girl showed the teacher the poster, and although my 'friends' were let off with a warning I got a severe telling off.

Therefore you are partly to blame for my punishment, and I am going to set YOU 200 lines as well. Now don't do it again.
**Richard Holland, Newark, Notts**

*We will not print naked ladies again. We will not print naked ladies again. We will not print naked ladies again. We will not. . . .*
**LM**

## ISSUE ONE AGAIN

Dear Lloyd,
I am afraid that I am one of those unfortunate persons who, in their ignorance, didn't buy the first issue of CRASH which has now been sold out. If you did decide to reprint Issue One I would be delighted to purchase a copy. However, I understand the financial implications of doing this and live in hope that eventually you may decide to reprint this issue. I have read in your letters pages (and know from some friends) about others in my predicament — maybe you could ask for people who would like a copy of Issue One to write in to give your support so that you could make up your own minds as to whether reprinting Issue One would be a viable enterprise.
**Nigel Ford, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire**

*I think we would need at least 20,000 people to make it really viable Nigel, but if that many write in then I think it's distinctly likely it will get reprinted*
**LM**




## DISINTEGRATION

Dear Lloyd,
I will not bother with all this rigmarole of saying how good CRASH is, although I think that it is, but will get straight to the point.

Looking through some of my various computer magazines I came across an advertisement from Digital Integration. Nothing seemed wrong at first, but after I had looked again, I noticed that the names of the two centre games were *Thunderbird* and *TT Racer*.

I then looked for another CRASH which had the same, or should I say different advert from D.I. After a while looking through the advertisers' index I found one. Looking at the names of the two centre games advertised I saw that they were different from the first ad! This time they were called *Tomahawk* and *TT Grand Prix*.

I thought at first that they were different games, but looking at the wording and pictures I found that they were identical. I would be grateful if you could tell me the real names of the games, and when they are due to be released.
**Tim Tyler, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire**

*Confusing isn't it? We just put the ads in Tim, we don't look at them! I believe there were some copyright problems with Digital's first choice of titles, and the latter ones are correct as of this moment. What's happened to the games which were due in September, I can't tell you.*
**LM**

## DON'T BELIEVE YOU

Dear CRASH,
Congratulations on a fab mag. But I've one point of information for you. My pals and I think that the letters printed in your magazine are made up and not sent in by readers at all. I think it should be Lloyd and the rest of the CRASH team who get the £12 worth of software for the best letter (that's if you do give out £12 worth for the best letter).

I also bet you £12 worth of software that this letter doesn't get printed, and I'll bet you as much software as you like that there will be no £12 worth of goodies on the way to my door.
**Murray Smith, Bucksburn, Aberdeen**

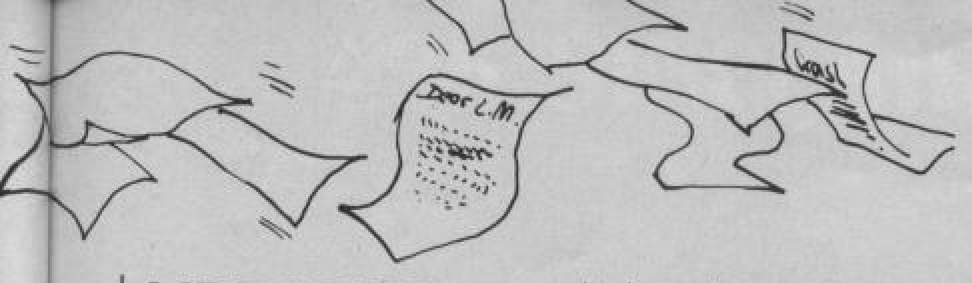
*Actually this is another rather old letter, so Murray will probably be surprised to see it printed, having been fooled into believing that we never print real letters. However, he's lost the first bet, but won the second. Quite right, Murray, no £12 worth of goodies coming your way, you doubting Thomas.*
**LM**

## WHO IS IT?

Dear CRASH,
A question. Whose is the mysterious voice on the CRASH Hotline answering machine? Whoever he is he sounds like he's been dragged through the valley of slime.

Oh, and by the way, I've completed *Atic Atac* in 6 minutes 33 seconds so you can feed that one to the bugs in the hall.
**Stephen Brooks, Plymouth, Devon**

*The voice on the Hotline is that of David Western, production designer, who can do a BBC like you'd never believe. Sadly the answering machine has been a bit poorly of late and tends to change recording/playback speed according to some logic of its own, which might account for the 'slime' effect. And your score for Atic Atac has been oft beaten I'm sorry to say.*
**LM**




## LIBRARIES

Dear Lloyd, I'm a lady of thirty who enjoys both your magazine and playing games on the household Spectrum — not your usual gamer I suppose! There are only three of us in the house, me, my husband and a five year old computer buff, but our TV is hardly ever used for watching programmes.

I've got a few points to raise, so here goes:

1) How about an update each month of all the games you've reviewed — just the overall percentage would do fine.

2) What do you think about software libraries? I know you take the ads, and can understand that software houses are wary of libraries because of the risk of their games being copied, but older games are so common that people can easily get hold of them if they want to make a copy.

We do buy games, but try to hire them first if we can. This way we find that we probably buy more games than we would, largely because we aren't afraid of wasting our money — and we also buy some games that we probably wouldn't have considered getting if we hadn't hired them.

I've often tried games in shops, but it's nerve wracking. There's always some smart alec in the background having a snigger at my futile attempts to survive the first onslaught, and the louder he sniggers, the more my fingers twitch and the worse I get. Often I decide against buying a game tested under these conditions, because I can't relax enough to feel my way around it.

I think libraries are a real boon, not only for us, but for people out of work for instance. It's not only schoolkids who don't have much money. How does a father on the dole who doesn't want his children copying games afford to buy them? Hiring is obviously a much cheaper alternative — pocket money will go much further with a library, and sometimes you can buy ex-hire tapes for a fraction of the new cost.

Yes, I think a good software library can provide a real alternative for people who want to be honest. I don't need to copy games because I know I've always got access to literally hundreds of games in the library I use. What can beat the excitement of trying different games all the time?

**Angela Simpson, Teesville, Cleveland**

*Publishers and authors have never really liked the arrangement of public lending libraries, which is why writers have now forced an arrangement where the libraries pay a small royalty every time a book is lent out. If you reduce it to a logical absurdity and assume no one buys a game except libraries, then obviously a game†book will not sell in sufficient quantities to warrant the effort that went into it. On the other hand, I think the points you raise sound very sensible. As to your first point, the . . . Ahem . . . aforementioned Index should solve most of those problems, but I guess a listing based on title, software house and overall rating wouldn't be a bad idea.*

**LM**

## WHERE'S THE MAP?

Dear CRASH,

When you include the results of the Ultimate Map drawing competitions, why not print in full the winning entry? For example, I was struggling away with *Atic Atac*, not getting very far, until you printed the map. One day, soon afterwards, I was able to complete the game, thus showing how helpful the map was.

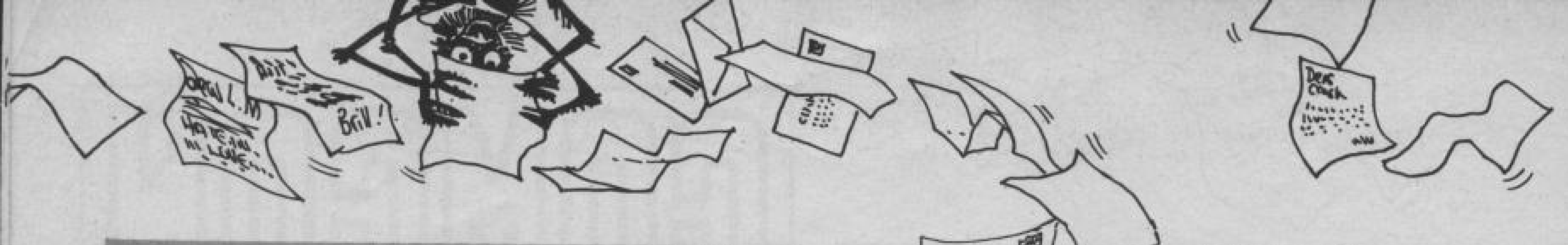
After running your *Sabre Wulf* map competition, you didn't print the winning entry — thus I am still struggling away, having only found one piece of the amulet.

Come on, help us lesser mortals by printing more maps!

**Michael Vallercy, Edinburgh**

*We are going to be doing more maps. I must confess on behalf of the art department, that plans to print the* Sabre Wulf *map were a little dampened when that naughty old* PCG *went and printed one along with their review of the game.*

**LM**



## SUPER VAT

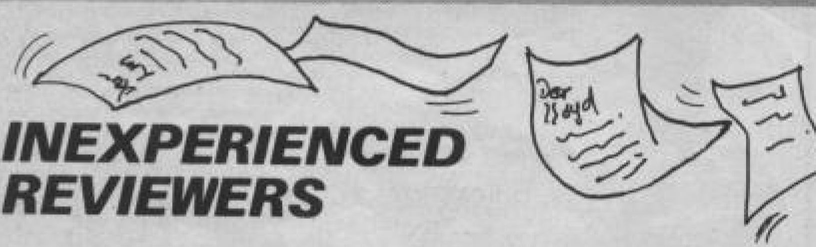
Dear CRASH,
Reading your comments on the Cost Effective letter in the February edition of CRASH, I noticed a serious misapplication of your VAT statistics. Although you state each of the chain eg wholesalers, charge 15% VAT, *they* are charged VAT themselves. Your comments subtly ignore this fact, and could be misinterpreted to mean a total of 45% VAT is paid by customers on software.

Theoretically it is only the addition of further transactions that would increase the VAT aspect. If a tape costs £5.95, only 78 pence belongs to the VATman. Where does the balance of £5.17 go? Like many of your readers I expect, I would like to see how this sum is broken down, and how much goes to each member of the chain. If one of the software companies would be willing to supply a breakdown of figures from the manufacture of the tape all the way through to the retail price it might just explain why tapes purchased direct from software companies cost the same as those bought from the local shop — but I doubt it!

**G Haverhand, Aston, Sheffield**

*I know that in CRASH Mail Order's early days CRASH used to pay between 50% and 60% of the retail price to buy tapes direct from software houses. Now that there are distributors in the chain, the software house has to knock off another 10% approximately from their share. Of course VAT gets added on all the way through the sales chain until it represents 15% on top of £5.17 for a £5.95 tape.*

**LM**



## INEXPERIENCED REVIEWERS

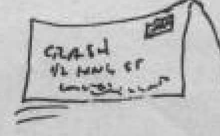
Dear Sir,
Sometimes I get the impression that your reviewers haven't got much experience of the Spectrum, which I think is very important. Take the review of *Full Throttle* — a reviewer said, 'perhaps the colour could have been better used on the background hills. . . .' I think the programmer has done very well to get the effect on the side of the road with alternate pixels. If the hills had been a different colour they would have gone green in places on the curves.

As an example of the reviewers not thinking out what they want to say is the review on *Moon Alert* (issue 6). How on earth can it get 83% for originality? Also in the comments you said, 'hardly an original idea.' These are so contradictory that it shows sheer carelessness. Mind you, these are quite rare niggles and the standard of your mag is very high indeed.

**Massimo Pilia, Lissenden Gardens, London NW5**

*I had a friend who lived in Lissenden Gardens once — anyway, on to the reviewers. Don't forget that there are usually three different reviewers whose comments appear, and they are sometimes contradictory. I recall in the* Full Throttle *review that the programmer was also praised for having avoided colour attribute problems, which still doesn't negate a very reasonable request for more colour. On* Moon Alert *(quite obviously not an original idea) there seemed to be a consensus that the way the game was put together was quite original. And anyway, the daft originality rating was dropped almost before it was used, as you must have noticed! Some CRASH reviewers happen to be ace arcade players, but quite a few are capable programmers and one studies commercial programming. All of them have been Spectrum owners for at least a year and most since the machine came out having had ZX81s before. None of them is infallible either!*

**LM**



## BUCK UP!

Dear Lloyd,
Ever since the Spectrum was introduced (was it *that* long ago?) 'its dead flesh' keyboard has been the subject of derision of many a BBC/CBM 64 owner. Even Spectrum owners (dare I say it?) have been known to occasionally curse their own small, rubbery bits.

So, along comes Sir Clive in his Sinclair Research moon buggy and thinks, 'Let's produce something to make these Beeb freaks eat their expansion ports.'

Voilà! The ZX Spectrum+ is born.

But what's this? Do I detect an air of disappointment? A cry of dismay?

A professional typewriter keyboard, a reset button and an improved ergonomic design PLUS an additional eighteen keys has failed to satisfy some people — what do you want for £180 — an IBM mainframe?!

As to the fact that you can buy an 'old version' Spectrum and an add-on keyboard for the price of a Plus — how many keyboards do you know that have sixteen extra single-entry keys? Correct me if I'm wrong — NONE. Also, to fit nearly any add-on keyboard you have to prise open the Spectrum thereby invalidating its guarantee (such a shame when it blows up the next day)!

One last point. The free software given away with the normal' Spectrum is only while stocks last, whilst the free pack received with the Spectrum+ is a permament feature. These packages aren't the same anyway — which would you rather have, *Tasword 2* or *Horace Goes Skiing*?

So don't knock the Spectrum+. Personally, I think it's a good (excellent) package with a lot going for it, and I would have thought, the logical progression from the ZX Spectrum.

**C. R. Beale, Formby, Merseyside**

*Which would you rather have — Tasword 2 or Horace Goes Skiing?*

**LM**

## WILL I BE A CROOK?

Dear Lloyd,
After seeing an advertisement in a magazine for games being sold at discounted prices, I phoned the company and asked for the free list of games. It came in two days time. But after looking through it I wondered whether or not they were pirated cassettes. Is it possible for this to be the case, and if so, is there any way of finding out whether or not they were? And if they were pirated and I bought one, then would I be breaking the law?

**Martin Leighton, Chester, Cheshire.**

*That's quite a difficult bunch of questions to answer as I'm not a legal eagle. However — it is quite possible that discounted games could include commercially pirated copies (it would rather depend on the reputability of the company). Some commercial pirates go to the trouble of re-printing (or 'ripping off' as it is technically known) the inlay cards in colour. It would be almost impossible for the general public to spot this, although the software house in question would be able to. Ripped off covers are always slightly inferior in print quality and the colours tend to look a little muddier, so if it is a game by a software house who's covers are well known to you, you might be able to tell. Technically, I suppose, by buying a pirated cassette you could be considered as having received stolen goods which is a criminal offence, but in the circumstances I very much doubt whether this would be taken seriously at all (unless you already have a record of such offences of course)!*

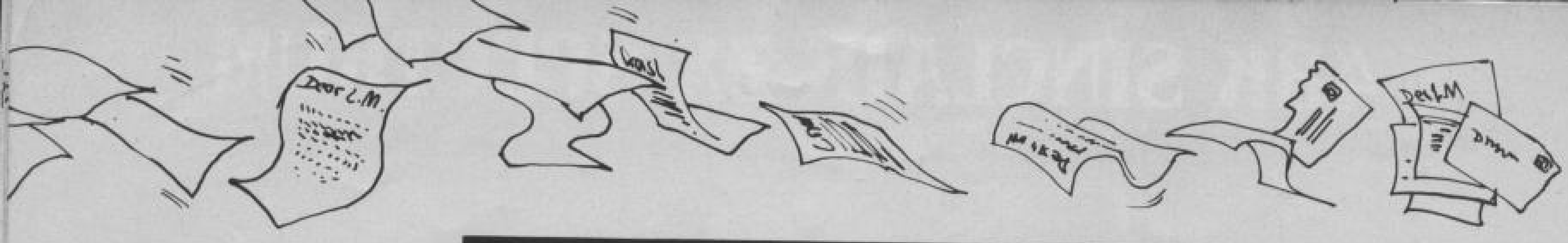
**LM**



# 48K SINCLAIR ZX SPECTRUM




"ALIEN 8" recommended retail price £9.95 inc VAT
Available from W.H.SMITHS, BOOTS, J.MENZIES, WOOLWORTHS
and all good software retail outlets. Also available from
ULTIMATE PLAY THE GAME, The Green, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire LE6 5JU
(P&P included) Tel: 0530 411485



## THEY GOT THEIR REVENGE

Dear Lloyd,
Glancing along the shelves at my local computer shop recently, the case for Crystal's (now Design Design) *Rommel's Revenge* caught my eye. I opened the box and read the blurb bit on the inlay card, which ended: '. . . Rommel's Revenge is the most spectacular game ever produced for your Sinclair Spectrum'.

More interested, I loaded the game on the shop's machine. It was only then that I discovered that the game was unplayable, with poor, slow graphics and no addictive qualities at all. Compared to *Knight Lore* or *Beach-head*, this game is complete and utter rubbish.

But the inlay card still claimed the game was the most spectacular ever! Strange. I have since discovered that this game is an early effort by Crystal, released soon after the Spectrum came on the scene. Then, it may well have been the best, but now it's nothing.

So the tape is being sold as a con. It would be like advertising a Model T Ford as the fastest car ever. It may have been when it was released, but those figures have been bettered. So, Advertising Standards Authority, take note. Companies must be stopped from making exaggerated claims about their products, and then the general public will be a lot safer.
—2Alex Martin, Wokingham, Berkshire

*Actually,* Rommel's Revenge *was hardly an 'early' Spectrum game, Alex, but you might be pleased to know that the Crystalite who programmed it heartily agrees with you about the game. As for the Advertising Standards — well, exaggerated claims perhaps, but you can hardly blame a shop keeper for selling something barely a year old.*

*The next reader also has litigation in mind for another software house. . . .*
**LM**

## WRONG GRASSHOPPER

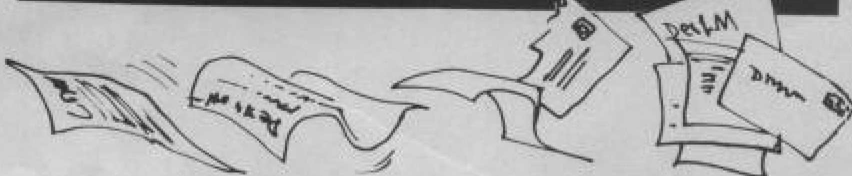
Dear CRASH,
Bug-Byte's successful and admittedly good game *Kung Fu* is the subject of my grumble. You see, they call it 'Kung Fu', but that's the problem. It isn't, it's KARATE! After all, if a consumer pays for Kung Fu, then Kung Fu is what he should get.

Consider this:

The man on the screen performs four moves. A punch, a strike, and two kicks. The PUNCH is identical to Karate's OI ZUKI, or lunge punch; the STRIKE is similar to both HAITO UCHI — the Ridge Hand Strike and URAKEN UCHI — the Back Fist Strike; the LOW KICK is MAE GERI (front kick) at a low level; the HIGHER KICK is identical to YOKO GERI KEAGE or the Side Snap Kick.

So be warned Bug-Byte; you may receive a visit from the Trade Descriptions people!
**Glenn Devey, Shirley, West Midlands**

*Thank you so much Glenn. You have solved the problem of why I got nowhere with this game — I thought it was Judo. I thought the punch was identical to a FIST IN THE FACE and the high kick looked similar to the street fighting tactic THE KICK IN THE GOOLIES. Now I'll have to get it out again and have another go.*
**LM**



## WASTED SPACE

Dear Lloyd,
Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude for such an excellent magazine, although part of the reviewing leaves something to be desired. . . .

Throughout virtually every issue of CRASH, there lingers the excuse '. . . sorry not enough space for that this month, wait till next month'. This is rather ironic, after nearly 1½ pages have been given to reviews of useless games, some of which barely gain half marks.

I for one would not read a lengthy review of a boring game — why not just give the outline with the percentage rating and use the space for more worthwhile information?
**Justin McNaughton, Eastcote, Middlesex**

*One man's useless game is another man's hit, and going back to the 'six months of a programmer's life' bit, it's unfair to slam a game without saying why in at least decent detail. S'my opinion anyway.*
**LM**

## DOWN UNDER

Dear CRASH,
Being a resident of the land down under, we get the British magazines about two months after they are released in Britain. Then, when we finally do get them, we read about competitions that expired the month before. Now, with some of the really good competitions this is extremely disappointing. So could you set a special expiry date for overseas entries? CRASH is a really great mag, but it's not so great when you can't enter the competitions.
**Colin Lockhart, Forbes, N.S.W. Australia**

*Well I suppose that's quite a fair point, but it would be a little difficult to administrate, since it would mean delaying the whole competition by as much as three months, wouldn't it? And it would be hard to put aside, say three or four prizes for possible overseas winners. I'm not quite sure what to say about that, Colin. Certainly distribution of overseas copies is pretty quick, so there must be delays down under. One way round it might be to subscribe, in which case you would get your copy sooner.*
**LM**

## GOOD IDEAS DEPT

Dear CRASH,
I think it would be a good idea if you had a section giving the names of all the people who have won competitions, as I entered the August *Pool* competition and was one of the winners. However, I did not receive my prize until late November. I had long before given up hope on the competition, and had nearly bought the game on a couple of occasions.

Having this in would save a lot of money if the prizes all come as late as mine. I appreciate that this would take up a few more pages but I still think it would be worth it.
**Marcus Cooper, Bromsgrove, Worcs**

*I'll put this forward at the next production meeting I'm invited to (probably be next year). I suppose one problem is that if there are a lot of competitions the page can look very boring, all those names and so on. Still, it does sound worthwhile.*
**LM**

## HE'S A CHEAT

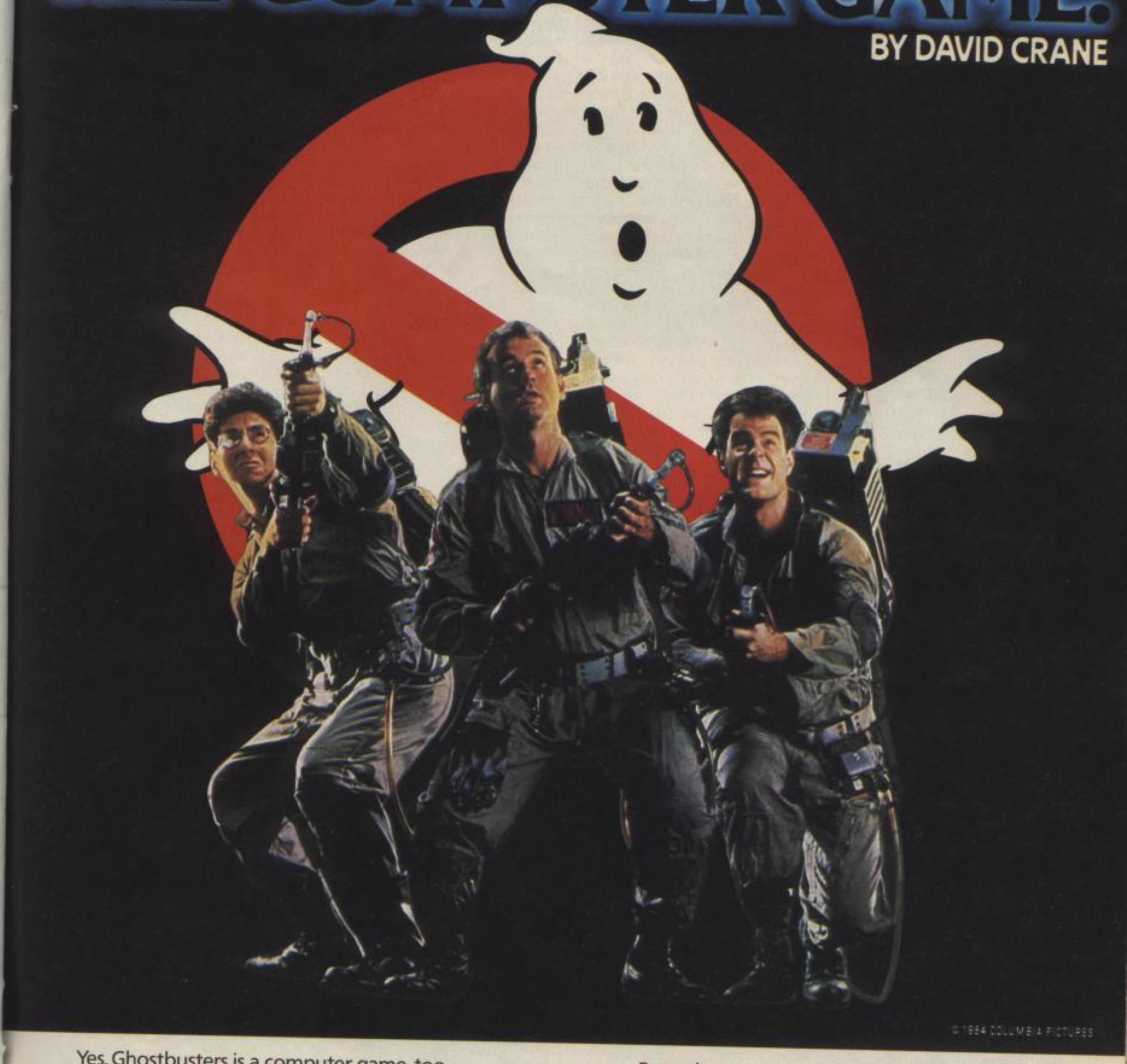
Dear Lloyd,
I'm writing to inform you that a person who appeared in the HALL OF SLIME, the so-called truthful Paul Avetoom is a fraud. He claims that he cleared 3.36m of DT's high jump. This is impossible. I tried one of your useful tips and it proved that the highest you can clear is 2.7m - for as soon as you attempt to jump any higher, the bar knocks itself off. . . .
**Graham Souter, Cleethorpes, South Humberside**

*Some people will do anything to get their names in print!*
**LM**

**Well, that's the lot for this month. Everyone is getting ready to go to the LET Exhibition, while I'm packing up my 1921 Hermes typewriter and going back to the cottage for another round of Kungrate. Don't forget Lloyd, I'm here at CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**

# GHOSTBUSTERS™ THE COMPUTER GAME.

BY DAVID CRANE




Yes. Ghostbusters is a computer game, too.

The game play follows the film with incredible accuracy. Even down to the chart-topping music score.

Your task is to rid the world – and in particular New York City – of a cataclysmic plague of ectoplasmic nasties.

Play it well and we give you a Ghostbusters franchise – with your own secret account number. Use this number and the money it brings you, to buy the same ghost busting gear they had in the film. (Don't worry – we'll give you some money to get started.)

You will have earned it. And you can use it to go to undreamed of levels. Don't try to use someone else's number, we'll find out.

From then on, it's you against the ghosts. All the way to the Temple of Zuul.

Where the final battle begins...

Designed by USA's David "Pitfall II and Decathlon" Crane and running on Commodore 64 cassette and disk and Spectrum. Coming soon on other systems.

**ACTIVISION®**

**Your computer was made for us.**

AVAILABLE FROM SELECTED BRANCHES OF BOOTS, WH SMITH, JOHN MENZIES, LASKY'S, SPECTRUM, RUMBELOWS, WOOLWORTH AND GOOD COMPUTER SOFTWARE STORES EVERYWHERE.

# OMNICALC 2

**Franco Frey** *investigates the facts and figures surrounding the latest spreadsheet offering.*

**Microsphere** has just launched an improved version of their original *Omnicalc* spread-sheet program, aptly named *Omnicalc 2*. The new version makes full use of the microdrive, RS232 and net facilities of interface 1. The program itself can be saved onto a microdrive cartridge and models can be saved and loaded from microdrives, the net or via the RS232. **Omnicalc 2** is also designed to support full-size printers, either via one of the many aftermarket Centronics interfaces or via the RS232 port of the ZX interface 1. *Omnicalc 2* includes now graphical representation of model results by plotting histograms.

## Basics

*Omnicalc 2* provides access to a grid of numbers which can be up to 99 columns across and 250 rows deep. Any mathematical function on the Spectrum can be used as formulae within the grid-fields so that any financial or engineering model can be generated. The program works on a prompt basis and provides several useful functions to minimise repetitive and time-consuming inputting.

## Of Ins and Outs

Upon loading the program checks for the presence of the interface 1 and if present will delay the auto-run to provide the possibility of saving the program to microdrive. Pressing a key during this period will initiate the microdrive save. During the SAVE and LOAD functions the program prompts for a channel which will dictate where the model is saved or loaded. This can be either cassette, microdrive 1-8, via RS232 channel 'b' or via the broadcast channel in the net. Similarly decisions can be made for print-outs. *Omnicalc 2* prompts for number of columns and the maximum values are 3 for the ZX printer or Alphacom 32, 9 for the 80 column printers and 15 for 132 column printers. Depending on the printer used, two different versions of *Omnicalc 2* can be loaded. "om 2" occupies the top of the Spectrum memory, whereas "om 64000" leaves the bytes between 64000 and 65535 free for printer interface software that will not fit into the 256 byte LPRINT buffer. In any case the driver software must be loaded before the program. Printers with serial interfaces can be connected up to the RS232 port of interface 1. In this case the printer channel (channel 3) must be opened as an RS232 channel. This can be done before (chapter 8 of the interface 1 manual) or after loading *Omnicalc 2* by using the Baud and Open 3 options of *Omnicalc 2*'s function X when the program has loaded. If the printer supports graphics, the program must be told where the specific hardcopy routine starts by using option G of function X.

## Of Skeletons and Grids

Any position in the grid is defined by a grid reference such as A1, A representing the line number (double letters from line 27 onwards), 1 the column position. The screen displays only a small portion of the entire grid, the 'window' on the grid. The window is 3 column by 15 lines and includes also the header information relevant to each column and each line. Grid references are used in equations. Unless otherwise specified, *Omnicalc 2* takes the grid reference as a relative position, A1 being the value in the box immediately to the left of A2, and therefore equations can easily be reproduced along whole rows or columns. Are the grid references to be taken as absolute values, they need to be proceeded by a k.

## The Works

**Two areas** are available for modelling. One is the actual spread-sheet and the other the so-called work area. The work area is used as a buffer area for moving values around within the spread-sheet, for the plotting of histograms or for the transfer of values to other spread-sheet models. Function W transfers the values from spread-sheet to work area or vice versa.

Work is started by selecting L for Load. Either an existing model may be loaded from tape, microdrive, via net or serial port, or the existing spread-sheet erased and a new one initiated by inputting the number of rows (15-250) and columns (3-99). The program determines whether there is sufficient memory space. If the Load option is selected, either spread-sheet data or work area data can be loaded.

At any time the spread-sheet model may be saved to tape, microdrive, via net or serial port. Again the choice can be made between spread-sheet data or work area data.

Unshifted cursors move the cursor around the screen, shifted cursors move the window on the grid. Function G positions the window to any indicated position.

I is used to enter information at the cursor location. It is followed by a prompt "text?" if the cursor is positioned in a heading position, or "Equation/Value/Blank/Text?" if in any other.

Option K copies the contents of the box under the cursor to any specified location. Option R repeats the contents to another position either to the right on the same row or down in the same column.

Totals or Sub-totals may be entered with function T. This accumulates all values above (column) or to the left (row) with the exception of previous sub-totals or totals. If sub-totals is selected, the program accumulates all values until another sub-total is reached.

An interesting and useful feature is Year (Y) which provides a fast method of feeding in the months of the year in the column or row after the first month has been put in manually.

There is the possibility of changing the grid-size during the working of a model by inserting or deleting a column or row with function A (Amend area).

Function C forces a recalculation of all variable values such as equations and totals. If option Repeat is selected, the program repeats the calculation until the value in the last box (bottom right corner) becomes zero. A choice is offered for the calculation to proceed row by row or column by column depending on the requirement of the worked model.

Quick mode (Q) may be selected for speeding up a model with a lot of data by not displaying already existing data. This allows for very fast window shifting. Mode (M) switches between integer and 2 decimal display.

At any time the original input data (Equation, total etc.) of a box may be checked by the Decode function (D).

Hardcopy can be obtained with the Print function which will print either any rectangle from within the model or all data within the model. To display the results in a more graphical way, a histogram may be plotted (shifted 9). Scaling is done automatically. Up to three groups of values may be displayed with solid, stippled or outlined columns. Column gaps may be selected if desired. The histogram can either have one column for every value, or can be stacked so that each column contains one value from each group stacked on top of each other. Once displayed, the histogram may be annotated and a hardcopy produced (shifted 9).

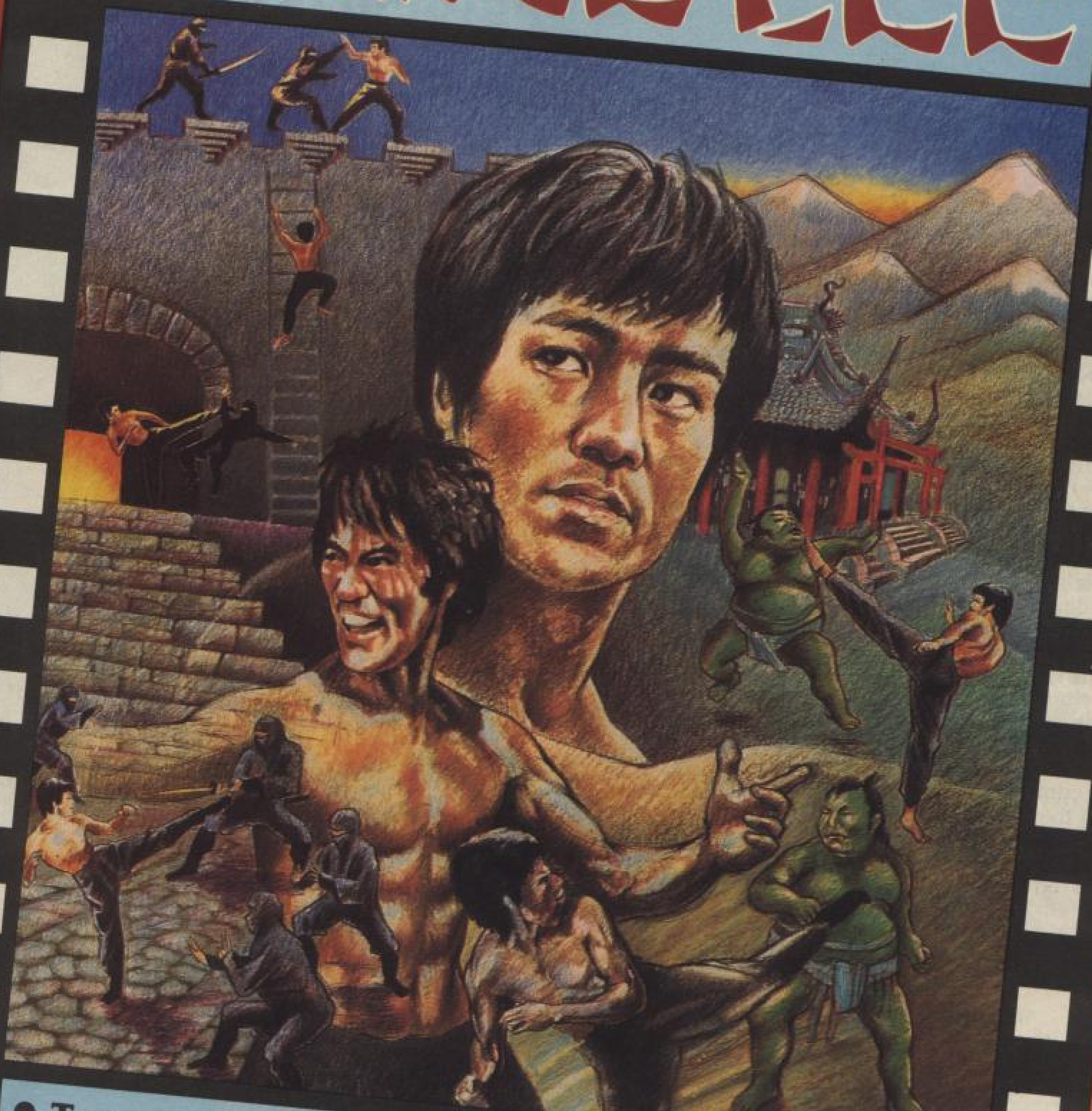
## Of Manual and Utilities

**Provided with the software cassette** is a detailed 32 page manual with a worked example, special notes on using microdrives and interface 1 and printers and a complete list and explanation of all available functions together with a list of error messages. The cassette contains two utility programs which allow the transforming of any original Omnicalc model into the new *Omnicalc 2* format.

## In Conclusion

**Omnicalc 2 presents itself** as a complete and easy to use spread-sheet package. Full use has been made of the interface 1 and microdrive facilities and the aftermarket Centronics interfaces and this is where the program really scores. Through the use of these peripherals it rises above the limits set by the ZX Spectrum hardware confines and shows itself to be a really professional tool.

Program: **Omnicalc 2**
Supplier: **Microsphere**
Memory: **48K**
Price: ***£14·85***







# 50 COPIES OF 'GYRON' TO BE WON!!

## In this competition from FIREBIRD

Crash Competition

Sadly, FIREBIRD didn't really feel they could let us offer a PORSCHE as the prize in our GYRON competition — but they have agreed to let us give away 50 copies of the game, which has already reached CRASH SMASH status — see page 16.

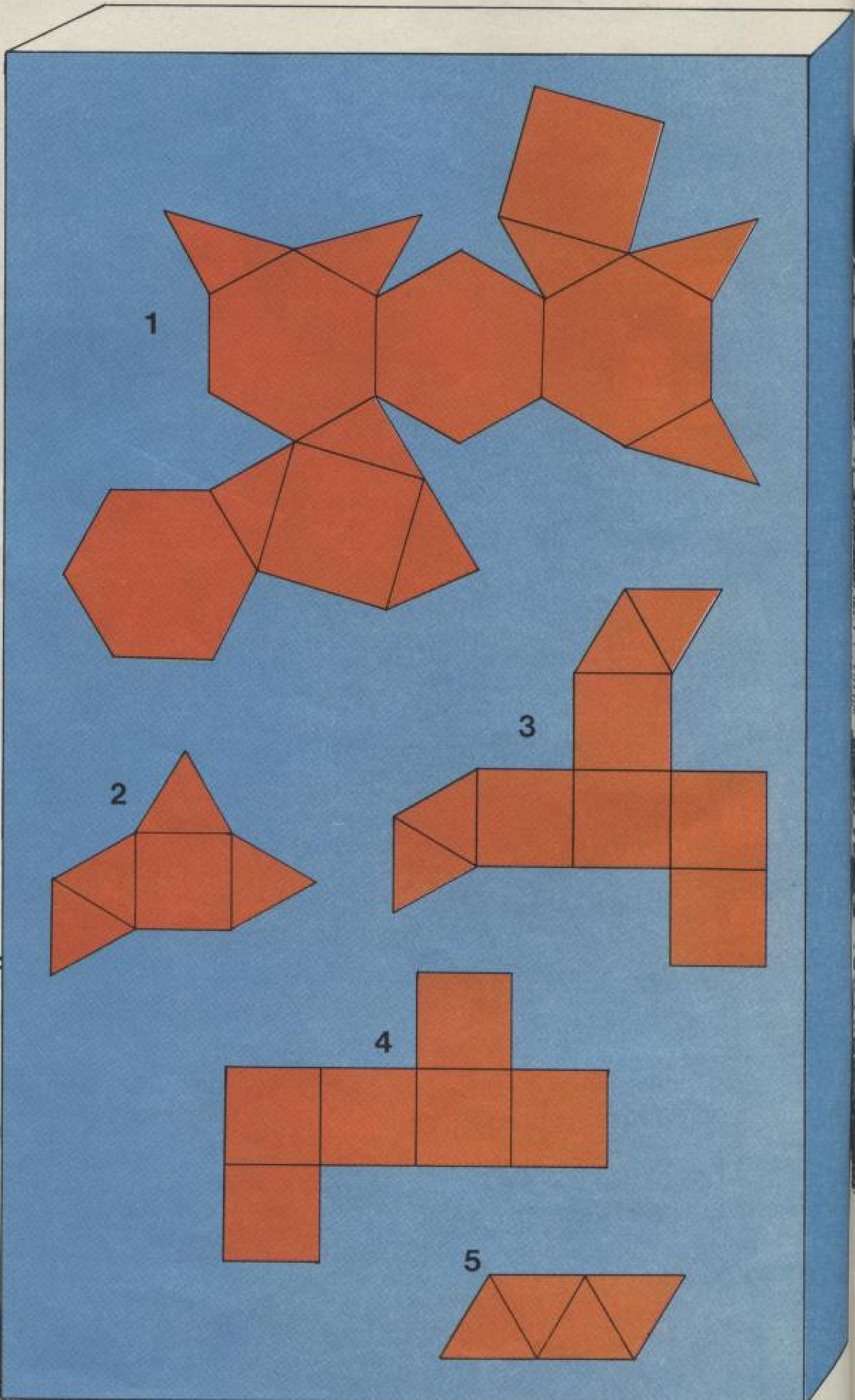
Win the game (or buy it for £9.95 if you're unlucky) and you could still be on the trail of that sleek motor vehicle — for FIREBIRD will be handing over the keys to a PORSCHE 924, or an equivalent suitcasefull of money, in October to the first person to have penetrated the heavily defended maze complex contained in the game and zap the computer it protects.

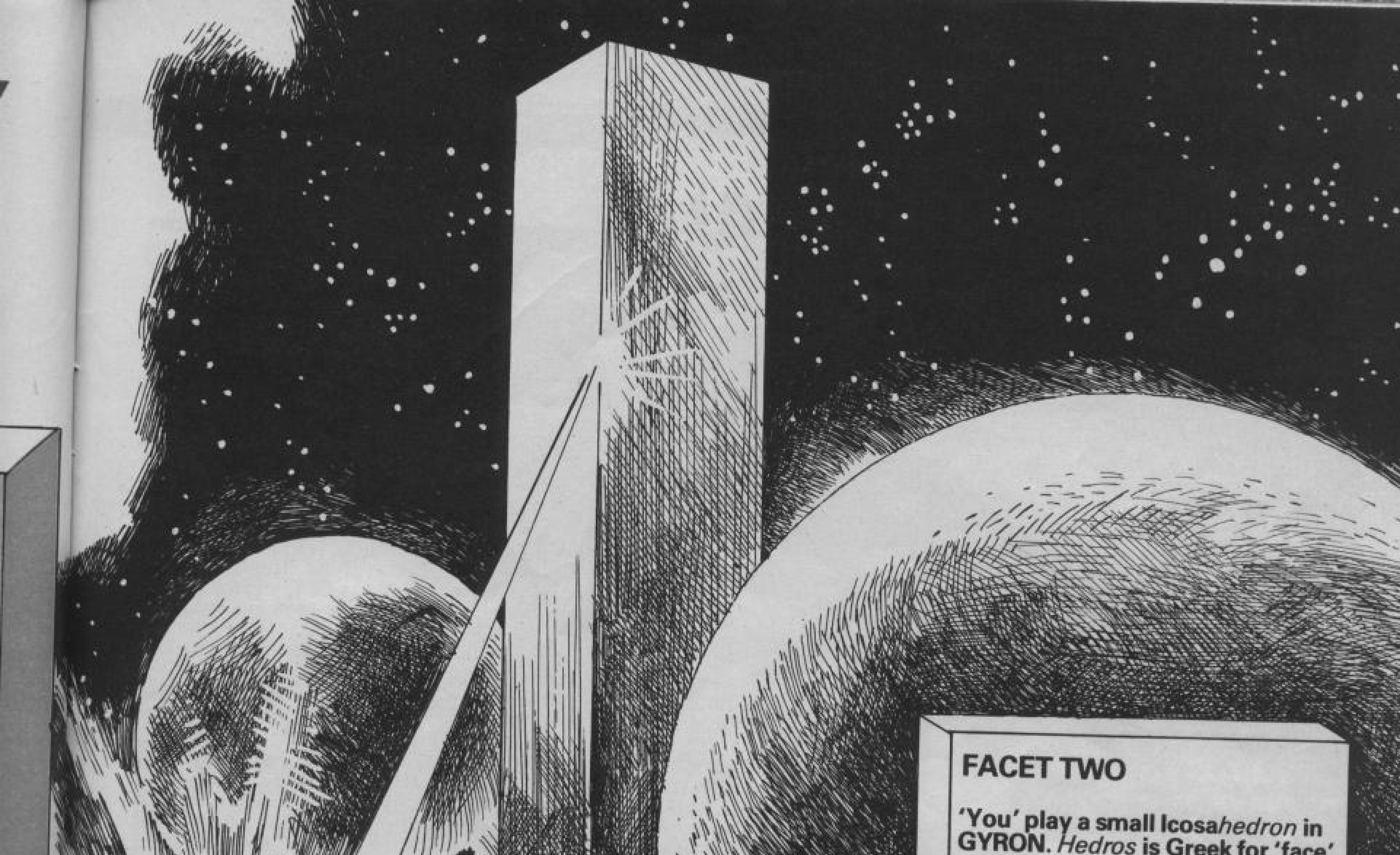
Our competition is much easier than the challenge presented by GYRON but then we couldn't spare the 4 man-years FIREBIRD invested in setting up their problem for you to have a go at cracking. Round here, we tend to work in terms of thing-minutes, so here goes:

### FACET ONE

Solid models of 3D geometrical figures can be made by tracing a network onto cardboard, then cutting, folding and sticking in best 'Blue Peter' squeezybottle fashion. On these pages we've drawn five of these 2D nets (labelled, with rare inspiration 1 to 5), and five representations of the solid models that they would make up to (A to E).

Using your skill and judgement, and if need be, scissors and paste, match em up!





## FACET TWO

'You' play a small Icosa*hedron* in GYRON. *Hedros* is Greek for 'face'

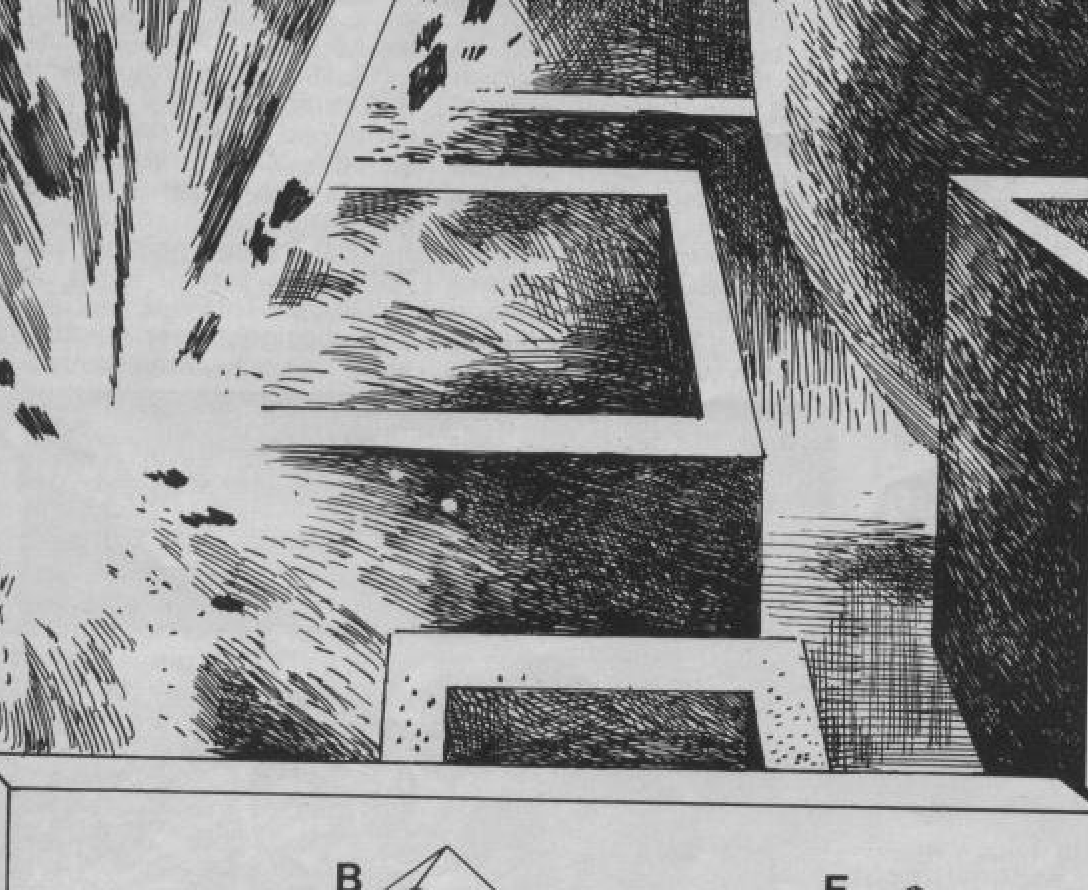
1) Who was Janus? a) A Greek God; b) The patron saint of Janitors, from whom they get their name; c) A Grecian coin? Why do you think we are asking you?

2) How Many faces does a Moebius Strip have? a) Two; b) seven; c) one; d) five?

3) What is "The Face"? a) A Greek tragedy; b) A mountain climb; c) A magazine; d) A dance

4) What was the many-headed serpent killed by Hercules called? a) Hedra; b) Hudra; c) Hidra; d) Hydra?

5) How many faces does an Icosahedron have? a) Nine; b) Nineteen; c) Ninety; d) None of these?




Answers please on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope to ***GYRON COMPETITION, CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB*** to arrive no later than first post ***MARCH 28***. If you want to enter more than one competition and save the stamp, please write 'Multiple entry' on the envelope you send them in and have each entry on a separate card or envelope. We'll love you for it!

The first 50 correct entries pulled from bag will each receive a copy of GYRON for the 48K Spectrum.

# 'I BET TOLKIEN DID THE SAME'

● *Some games are released that seem to change everyone's concept of what can be done on a computer.* **Lords of Midnight** *was one such. Now with its successor* **Doomdark's Revenge** *out, 'Midnight' fanatics eagerly await the third and final part of the trilogy. But will it be the final game in the series, and did you know that* **Lords of Midnight** *could have been called something entirely different?* **ROGER KEAN** *travelled across the Mersey to talk to 'state of the art' programmer and 'Midnight' author* **MIKE SINGLETON** *about the past, the present and the future as seen through* **The Eye of the Moon** ●

It seemed suitable to talk to Mike Singleton in the coffee lounge of Liverpool's Adelphi Hotel, because the 'lounge' is a vast, carpeted and pillared area echoing to the sounds of the Roaring Twenties, a time when the lounge was probably full of brightly dressed, wealthy Liverpudlians — a bit like a vast game waiting to be fired by the player. The time of the hotel's heyday was also the formulating period of JRR Tolkien, the fantasy fiction author who can justly claim to the the source material for so many computer adventure games today. Mike, who had nipped across the Mersey from his home in Wallasey, and I sat down in solitary splendour and I asked him first whether the solitary life of a programmer requires more self-discipline than his previous profession which was a teacher.

'What I find most difficult is getting started actually, once the program is going it's easier. It's always tough if the deadline is looming. On *Doomdark's Revenge* I did underestimate by six weeks how long it would take to finish. As the original deadline was approaching I was pulling out all the stops and working till two or three in the morning and then getting up at nine and carrying on again. You can only do that for so long. You can do it towards the end of the program, and I miscalculated it and I found I'd knocked myself out and still had a lot to do. So finishing *Doomdark's Revenge* was a real grind.'

Between programming stints Mike has another major commitment to the 'play by mail' game which he has run for several years now and which is called *Star Lord*. The game is an investment he made of royalties received for Sinclair programs in the ZX81 games packs.

'I think I'm right in saying that it was the first play by mail game to be processed in this country. We used to have about 700 players — it's come down a bit now. It's done on a PET with a hard disc and a nice little ink jet colour printer so you get colour printouts of your position in the galaxy, and in addition to the maps you get battle reports and how much fuel there is, and a customised order form on the bottom which you send back in with your orders for starships on it. It costs £1.25 a turn to play, so it's really for fanatics. The longest game's been going on for about three years now — it's reached turn 90!'

Which means the players really have to be wealthy fanatics to have already spent £112.50. But it seems you can play for free if you become an Emperor which must be quite an incentive!

'If it's a fresh game you can probably become Emperor, if you're lucky or skilful, within 10 turns. But once a game's got an Emperor they tend to hold onto it quite desperately,' Mike added with a laugh. 'But we have had one or two Emperors recently who have dropped out because they have got rather tired of being Emperor through insufficient challenge although they have got all the other players in there against them.'

*Star Lord* was set up with money from royalties, and I asked Mike how he started off life as a games programmer.

'I was given a little Sinclair programmable calculator for my birthday — it must be over five years ago — which had 32 programmable steps! I'd done a matchstick game, you know, you've got so many matchsticks in a row and you take off one, two, three. A very simple formula to work out. I had a friend who worked in a betting shop and he was very interested in working out bets on it. There are some very complicated bets — there's one called 'around the clock' which actually consists of 13 different bets on three horses, and I wrote a little program which would calculate 'around the clock' and then we decided we would try and do it commercially. Between us we chipped in for a Texas Instruments programmable which went up to 200 steps and a magnetic card and managed to have around fifteen different types of bet. Then we graduated to a PET, and the idea of that was not to just calculate the bets but to do all the office work in the betting shop as well.'

It seemed like a good idea but ran into problems when a race was about to start and because of the rush to the counter it was impossible to put the information into the computer fast enough. But Mike and his betting friend were not quite finished with the horses.

'I just messed around with the computer for a bit and came up with something called 'Computer Race' which was a computer-run horse race.'

'That had graphics of the horses?'

'Oh yes. This was specifically designed for betting shop use, say when the rac-

'I just messed around with the computer for a bit and came up with something called 'Computer Race' which was a computer-run horse race.'





***On the right tracks, Midnight author and programmer MIKE SINGLETON outside Lime Street Station in Liverpool.***

ing was off because of bad weather. It was developed to the point where it would do a complete printout of all the operations done during the day, so you had a list of all the races run that day for security purposes, and it was on ROMs so it couldn't be tampered with. We actually sold one to someone in Ireland which apparently is still running. In Britain I'm afraid we had problems with the Betting Laws, which are very strange. You're not allowed to have anything that resembles entertainment or comfort in the betting shop. I mean having chairs is a little bit dicey, you might be contravening the laws — you're encouraging people to go into a betting shop. We had a test case where we had informed the police so that they could bring a test prosecution and it went against us, it was about 49/51. So that was the end of that.'

But it wasn't quite the end of the graphical idea because at about that time the Vic home computer emerged and Mike converted the game for the new machine which offered better graphics but meant simplifying the content. Out of the original idea came the game *Shadowfax*

'The moving horses came from the betting game on the PET. In fact I took the graphics from Muybridge's photographs of horses — they must be the oldest computer graphics about! They've been squeezed and stretched a bit since — they were stretched a bit on the Vic as it's got much longer pixels and they were squeezed a bit on the Spectrum.'

Muybridge was a famous early Victorian photographer who became obsessed with capturing moving images by using time lapse still photography, and has often been credited with being a forerunner of the modern cinema. But Mike seemed to be putting the horse before the cart in this case. I wondered whether he had had any trouble in selling the idea to Postern who released *Shadowfax* and he explained that there had been a previous association.

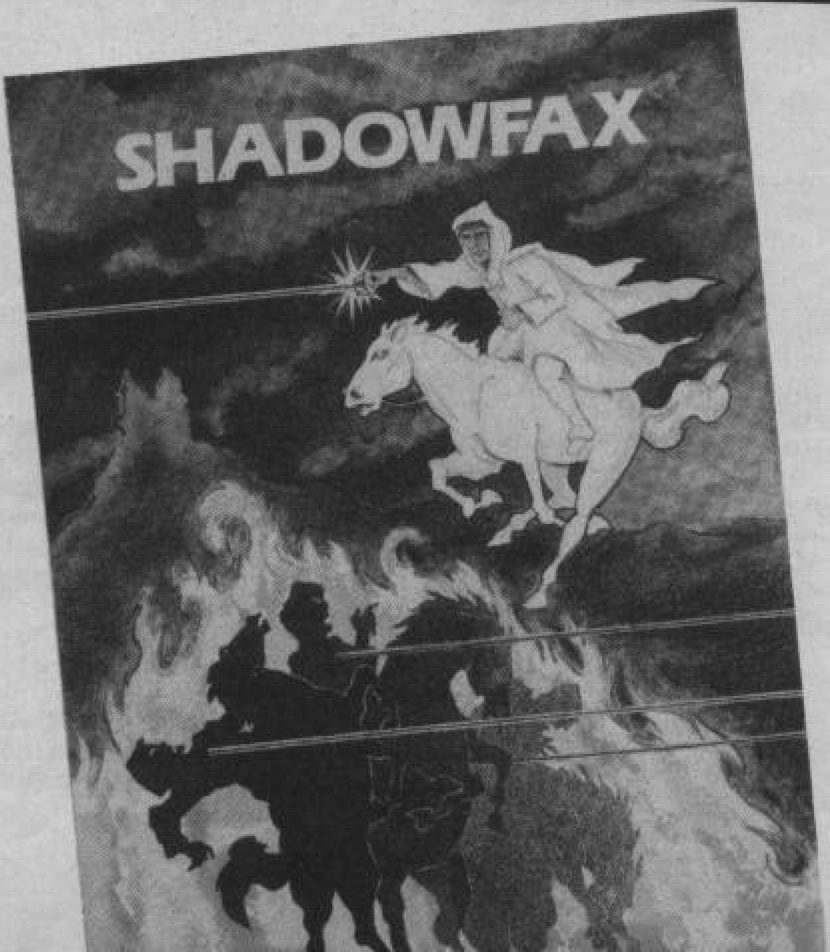
'Well I'd already been doing games programs for the PET for Petsoft. And they had a deal going with Sir Clive to do programs for the ZX80, that was about 1980, and I did six 1K machine code programs. I'd just finished those when the deal fell through with Sinclair. But they gave me his number and I phoned up and said I've got these programs and he said send them through. In November of that year, happily, I was invited down to Cambridge and I saw the prototype of the ZX81 on EPROM and I was asked if I could do the games for the coming ZX81. Unfortunately I couldn't convert the ZX80 games because of the extra systems variables. But I eventually came up with six short 1K programs in BASIC in about two weeks over the Christmas holidays and those became 'Gamespack Number 1'. I don't know how many got sold, but I got about £6,000 in royalties! I mean it was about the best rate of pay I've ever had or are ever likely to have!'

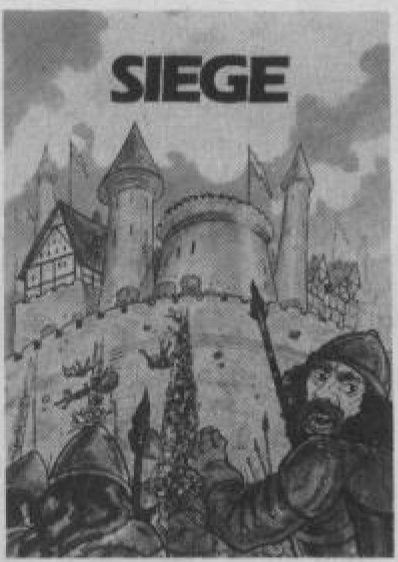
It was this money that Mike invested in equipment and advertising to set up the *Star Lord* game. But his link to Postern was that James York

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Limited, one of the larger tape duplicators, had done duplication for Petsoft. Postern was an offshoot of James York and included an ex-Petsoft director on its board. The software house was set up to extend James York's operation into the production, packaging and marketing of software. So for Mike Singleton, there was already the contact and he never had any problems in getting software marketed through them.

'There were three programs I did for Postern in the early days, all on the Vic originally, which were *Shadowfax*, *Siege* and *Snake Pit*. I'd done the snakes about six months before I worked out what to do with them, just spent ages watching them wriggle about the screen! That was all on the 3.5K Vic.'






'Did you do the Spectrum versions for Postern?'

'I did most of the Spectrum versions except *Shadowfax* which had a listing of all the graphics, well graphics were a major part of the game, but I did all the others. I think *Snake Pit* turned out the best of all.'

'So what happened after that? There's quite a gap between *Snake Pit* and *Lords of Midnight*?'

'At the same time as doing that I was running *Star Lord* and it was expanding quite quickly. We had reached about three or four hundred players by then from all over. I think our furthest player was in New Guinea! We still get phone calls from the strangest places. People are willing to spend a fortune on their moves, like when their space ship is about to get blown up! The next thing I did in terms of computer games was the *3 Deep Space* series which was a bit of a flop I must admit. It worked well on the BBC and Postern had insisted on it being done on the Spectrum, Commodore 64 and Vic if possible. And it was just about possible if you fiddled around with the telly enough and your eyesight was A1! It was very tough doing the Spectrum one because the colours weren't right. The trouble with the Spectrum is that there's always too much differentiation not only between the actual colours themselves, their hue, but their intensity. I originally wanted to use blue and red but the blue is just too dark compared to the red. So you could never adjust the television set to get an equal image. And there were other problems such as you can't mix the colour properly in a character cell. I know that the effect wasn't really visible to many people. It was very visible to me because I'd spent about three months sitting in front of a TV screen with these damned goggles on, and by the time I'd finished that I hardly needed the goggles. I remember driving down to Cheltenham where Postern are based and I found myself driving along the motorway gazing into the distance trying to estimate how many hundreds of yards the next car was in front of me! I think the major problem was that you were bound to get quite a high rate of returns from people whose eyesight just couldn't cope with it. In fact there was one chap, apparently, who wrote to Postern thanking them for the game because having played it and been unable see the effect, had gone along to the opticians and discovered he really did have defective vision!'

It seems a long gap and a huge leap from *3 Deep Space* to the amazing *Lords of Midnight* as well as a change of software house. I asked Mike how he had become involved with Beyond.

'I'd done quite a bit of writing for *Computer & Video Games* when Terry Pratt was the editor. He moved across to set up Beyond within EMAP's framework, and he'd been pressing me for quite a while for a game for Beyond and I'd been saying, well yeah I'll come up with something sometime. It was September 83, he came up to Chester and we had a chat about some of the ideas I'd got. I had some landscaping in mind. I'd never seen anything like *The Hobbit* or I'd never really bothered with it, but a friend of a friend had a Commodore 64 version of it, and I was appalled at the speed at which the graphics came up! I assured him something better could be done.

'One of my primary rules in designing a game is to try and make everything as functional as possible so that, hopefully, the graphics should have a purpose as well as being mere decoration. I think that came out best in *Snake Pit* where everything, the shape of the snakes and so on, all had a functional purpose, they actually formed walls and you ended up with a moving maze. So the idea of landscaping popped into my head where you would have to use the graphics to know where you were and to plot your progress through the map. I mentioned it to Terry and, I had some other ideas, but he liked that one best of all. Originally it was going to be called *Lords of Atlantis*, because I'd been toying with an idea, a similar idea, which was more map-based rather than panorama-based, for play by mail. So I grabbed a few of the ideas I'd had for that and mixed them up with the landscaping and that's how *Lords of Midnight* started off.'

'One of my primary rules in designing a game is to try and make everything as functional as possible so that, hopefully, the graphics should have a purpose as well as being mere decoration.

'You make it sound very technical, yet people clearly went overboard when the game came out for the whole fantasy world that's created in the game. You must have had a fairly clear idea of the characters and the way life is carried on in the Land of Midnight?

'Yeah, but it grew from the initial idea of landscaping, which meant a terrain type game rather than rooms like you get in most adventures. So I made a few tests first to check whether it would work and then drew a large map, which I still have, in nice felt tip colours. It isn't quite as difficult as it sounds and really I bet Tolkien did the same — you start off with a few word endings and tack different syllables on the front until you come up with something that sounds good so you sit there going 'Ushgarak, Ashgarak, Ighrem' to yourself until you get something that sounds nice or horrible according to what you want. And once I got the map then I started doing the story before I got on with any programming and it was really the story that built up the atmosphere. I managed to get through the story quite quickly, in about three weeks. And that clarified all the major characters anyway — there were a few characters who came in later like Farflame the Dragonlord, he came in during the actual programming stage.'

Many writers of fiction have noted that once created, a character starts to take on a life of its own, dictating further events, and a whole fantasy world can apparently write itself. I asked Mike whether a similar thing had happened when he was working on the story of *Lords of Midnight*.

'That's how I tend to write anyway. I start off and let it take its own course. Although with this it was a little different because I already knew that what I was aiming towards had to be some sort of climax, they all had to set off against Doomdark at some stage. I think the most fun was doing Fawkrin the Skulkrin, I had some real fun with him.'

'Was it to be a trilogy from the outset?'

'Yes. It was really, although Terry Pratt was keeping his options open to see how the first one went.'

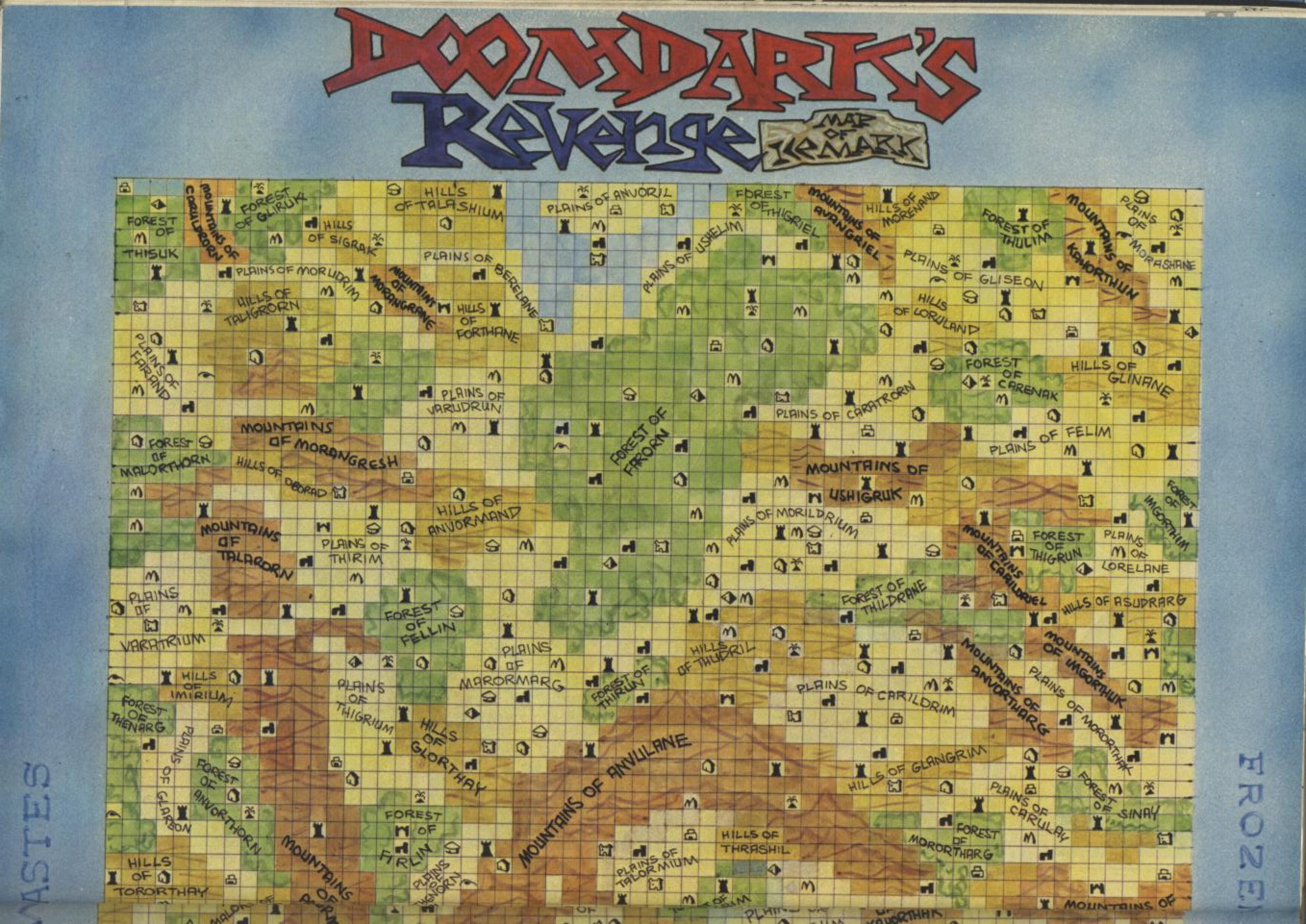
'I imagine it didn't take them too long to make up their minds that it would be a trilogy!?'

'No!' said Mike with a laugh.

'So when did you actually start on *Doomdark's Revenge*? Immediately after *Lords of Midnight* or was it already under way?'

'Well it wasn't really. An awful lot of new stuff went into *Doomdark*, which is really why it took a bit longer to do than I'd anticipated. To fit the new stuff in I had to restructure the way the game was moderated internally quite considerably. I'd got about 3 bytes spare on *Midnight*, I know I'd already streamlined it about three or four times to get it to fit in, so I had to take a slightly different approach to *Doomdark's Revenge* although certain things remained the same, such as the routines for putting the graphics up on the screen were unchanged.

94


DOOMDARK'S
Revenge
MAP OF ICEMARK
FOREST OF THISUK
MOUNTAINS OF CARULDRORN
FOREST OF GLIRUK
HILLS OF SIGRAK
HILLS OF TALASHIUM
PLAINS OF ANVORIL
FOREST OF THIGRIEL
MOUNTAINS OF AVANGRIEL
HILLS OF MORENAND
FOREST OF THULIM
MOUNTAINS OF KAHORTHUN
PLAINS OF MORASHANE
PLAINS OF MORUDRIM
PLAINS OF BERELANE
PLAINS OF USHELIM
PLAINS OF GLISEON
HILLS OF TALGRORN
MOUNTAINS OF MORANGRANE
HILLS OF FORTHANE
HILLS OF LORULAND
PLAINS OF FARAND
PLAINS OF VARUDRUN
FOREST OF CARENAK
HILLS OF GLINANE
PLAINS OF CARATRORN
MOUNTAINS OF MORANGRESH
FOREST OF FARORN
PLAINS OF FELIM
FOREST OF MALORTHORN
HILLS OF DEORAD
MOUNTAINS OF USHIGRUK
HILLS OF ANVORMAND
FOREST OF IMGORTHIM
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HILLS OF THUDRIL
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FOREST OF FIRLIN
HILLS OF THRASHIL
FOREST OF MORORTHARG
HILLS OF TORORTHAY
PLAINS OF TALORMIUM
MOUNTAINS OF
FROZE
ASTES


WASTES
FROZEN WA
EVERY SQUARE REPRESENTS ONE LOCATION
FOREST
MOUNTAINS
HILLS
PLAINS
GAME © BEYOND — MAP DRAWN BY O. FREY WITH HELP FROM BEYOND AND CRASH READER TONY EVANS OF KIRKHAM, LANCS.
MOUNTAINS OF UARORTHORN
PLAINS OF TALORTHUK
FOREST OF FINIEL
PLAINS OF ZARORMAND
HILLS OF MALANGRORN
MOUNTAINS OF THIBARG
PLAINS OF FORAVE
HILLS OF RASHARNE
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PLAINS OF GLARIEL
MOUNTAINS OF BERELORN
PLAINS OF MALORMORN
HILLS OF GLORTHUK
FOREST OF SELRIK
PLAINS OF KAHIRIM
FOREST OF FIRARG
FOREST OF FELRAND
MOUNTAINS OF ANGRORN
HILLS OF GLOREON
PLAINS OF VALIDRANE
MOUNTAINS OF ANVORMANE
PLAINS OF KAHORMANE
PLAINS OF CARORMANE
TORORTHAY



# KEY TO·THE·MAP·OF ICEMARK

Cities — Fortresses
Held by friend or foe.

Towers – often sources of information on objects and characters.

Halls — Huts — Fountains
Often sources of refreshment

Gates — Pits — Temples
Entrances to an underground network of tunnels

Palaces — Stones – attract hidden powers..



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The graphics were different of course but that's just a question of redrawing them. But as I was doing *Lords of Midnight* I realised there were ways I could have done it more efficiently if I'd realised it at the beginning, but by then it was too late to go back.'

'What sort of things do you mean?'

'One of the things — I suppose it's only a technical point — is that different types of characters and objects had been stored in different formats of table in *Lords of Midnight*, so I'd got tables for armies, tables for characters, I'd got tables for objects, and being in machine code each one needed its own little routine for access. But what I did in *Doomdark's Revenge* was make all the tables work on the same sort of format so they could all be accessed by the same routine even though they were different tables, which compressed it all considerably. Other things came out of that as well. With each character having his own particular starting location, instead of having to save two **x** and **y** co-ordinates I only had to save the one and you get the character's name and his starting location, so that saves a bit more. I have to do a little more text compression yet again.'

'How does the text work in these games then?'

'On both *Doomdark's Revenge* and *Lords of Midnight* it works on words so you've got a token for each word. In fact the vocabulary in both of them only goes up to 250 words. It's all done by swapping round, putting different endings on them — there's a few escape codes, so you can do an escape code for a new paragraph, an escape code for literal *ascii* characters, for commas and full stops, and an escape code for capitals at the beginning of a word. In *Lords of Midnight* I had more trouble fitting it in because it was the first time round and my estimates were further out than they were for *Doomdark's Revenge*. The actual words for *Lords of Midnight* were stored in five-bit blocks so five bits for a letter, which meant having huge long strings of bytes which you had to access five bits at a time — a rather awkward little routine and it made putting the text up a little bit slower than in *Doomdark's revenge* which had more space and allowed me a byte per letter, which is a great luxury!

'I just rationalised the way the language was being used in *Doomdark's Revenge*. Starting off - and because I started off in *Lords of Midnight* with an idea and then put it into program form, I got sort of strange names that didn't quite fit in with an easy way of putting them up. So you might have, I don't think it exists, but you might have the Plains of Dawn and then you might have Dawnhenge. But if you have everything as the *Something* of *Something* obviously it's easier to program. Just little rationalisations like that, the way the language was used in *Doomdark's Revenge* meant I could compress it more.'

The second part of the Midnight trilogy has proved as popular as the first. Mike is now at work on the ideas behind the third part, to be called *The Eye of the Moon*. I asked Mike whether we could expect to see some differences between the first two parts and the third.

'Well, perhaps some extra features, yes, but you will still get a lot of familiar aspects. And it takes place to the south of the Land of Midnight. Basically the story as it stands at the moment is that Luxor is dying, it's some years on and he's reached the end of his tether, and he wants to see what is going to happen to Midnight in the future. So Morkin goes off in search of the magical jewel called the Eye of the Moon which enables people to see into the future, so that Luxor can then rest in peace.'

'Is there a natural enemy in this one like Doomdark or Shareth?'

'Haven't decided that yet! There will be enemies. I was discussing this last night with someone, wondering whether we should have an enemy that you have to defeat or just an enemy who's possibly hindering you, but not be the main objective. It's also debatable what Luxor finds when he looks into the jewel. Someone suggested he finds that Midnight has been turned into a multi-story car park!'

'And beyond the trilogy, are there likely to be any more in the series?'

'I think there could be, I don't want the idea to get stale. Leave it to others to carry on the format perhaps, I think I'd be getting a bit stale. And I think that on current plans *Eye of the Moon* will probably stretch the technique as far as it will go. On current plans anyway, I don't think you can get much more out of the Spectrum than *Eye of the Moon* will provide — it's going to be bigger again. You've only got 6,000 locations in *Doomdark's Revenge* but estimates for *Eye of the Moon* are that it will be considerably bigger than that, hopefully more variety in the landscapes as well.'

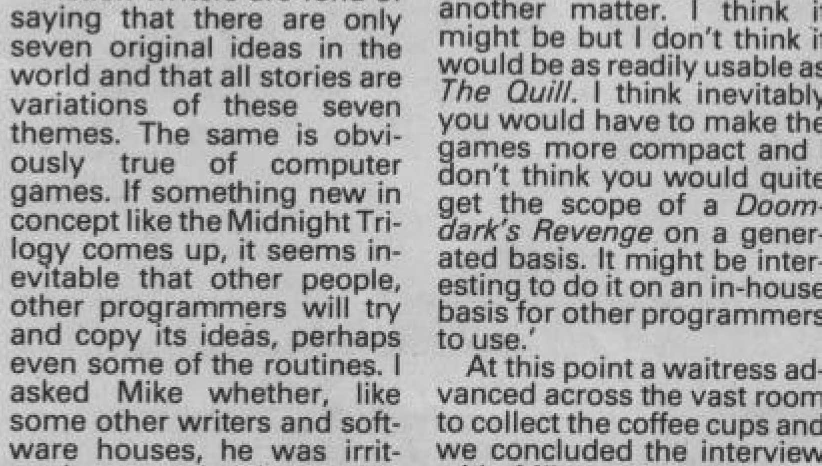
Fiction writers are fond of saying that there are only seven original ideas in the world and that all stories are variations of these seven themes. The same is obviously true of computer games. If something new in concept like the Midnight Trilogy comes up, it seems inevitable that other people, other programmers will try and copy its ideas, perhaps even some of the routines. I asked Mike whether, like some other writers and software houses, he was irritated or worried by having others copy his ideas.

**Someone suggested he finds that Midnight has been turned into a multi-story car park!**

'I think that's more a compliment than anything. I think I might get annoyed if someone managed to do it better! I'm sure that will happen at some stage. But until it does, every so-called rip off is a bit of free advertising for the original and in fact I think there is one advert currently going round for something called *King Arthur's Quest* by Hill MacGibbon which has a main headline in the ad which starts 'After Midnight . . .', and some of the techniques are similar. But I think that's more likely to help Midnight more than it'll help Hill MacGibbon.

'Personally I would prefer other people to take up the idea of doing an epic game and produce others in the format rather than keep on doing the same thing myself. One idea I've toyed with is producing something along the lines of *The Quill* with graphics, a generator program for writing epic games. Whether it's feasible is another matter. I think it might be but I don't think it would be as readily usable as *The Quill*. I think inevitably you would have to make the games more compact and I don't think you would quite get the scope of a *Doomdark's Revenge* on a generated basis. It might be interesting to do it on an in-house basis for other programmers to use.'

At this point a waitress advanced across the vast room to collect the coffee cups and we concluded the interview with Mike going off to be photographed outside Lime Street Station before returning across the river to carry on working out the story line for *Eye of the Moon*. We returned to our car and as we were leaving the multi-story car park, I briefly wondered whether once it had been the Land of Midnight...







# DEREK BREWSTER'S Adventure Trail

## THERE IS A FAULT, PLEASE ADJUST YOUR SETS

I read George Orwell's book way before 1984 but found it strange the way everyone last year went to great lengths to point out how modern society bore little relationship to the one portrayed in the novel. I was one of the few people to take the opposing view. If I remember rightly, and it is a long time since I read Orwell (at Primary school — it was slotted in between the Red and Orange Books and Peter and Jane go Ferreting) the book tells of how telescreens impose a highly ritualised life-style on the island's inhabitants. Statistics were used to show how things were getting better when it was plain things couldn't get much worse. What of our society?

During the last cold winter the electricty board met with very high demands on electricity, supplying in excess of 45,000 megawatts. Although this demand, brought on by the severe temeratures, was exceptional it was exceeded by the confluence of the end of a final episode of a BBC television series and a commercial break in a film on ITV. What this tells us about society is startling and leads me to think the power wielded by television is out of all proportion to its authority. To give Orwell's novel renewed topicality, simply substitute the word telescreen with the word television. Or to paraphrase a learned Canadian, if the medium is the message then I'm afraid the news isn't good.

So what has all this got to do with software? Well let's first take newspapers as an example. The light-weights of Fleet Street would have little to do with TV during its infancy yet now find it profitable to devote up to two-thirds of their space to the gogglebox and its plethora of soap operas and petit politics. The crucial point with software is not that tie-ins with TV programmes is a bad thing in itself, it's just that, if TV is not quite Big Brother, it is large enough to intimidate anyone with the idea of buying rights to a TV programme into parting with a considerable amount of money.

The point is, big business, delightfully absent in the early days of software, scares me an awful lot because big business needs a big turnover to realise big profits to get even bigger. It can get to the ridiculous stage where you either buy what they tell you to or you buy nothing at all. (If you don't think things could ever get that bad try buying a decent pair of shoes in the High Street).

Remember, you can't beat the imagination of one lone programmer or a small team huddled in deep thought around a project and also, TV seldom comes up with new ideas itself but in almost every case relies on a steady stream from books, stories, newspapers or the good old radio. It would be nice to think that we could choose what we particularly like from books, comics etc, rather than wait for some comfy TV people to decide this for us. And I would hope the same could be true for software.

## CASTLE BLACKSTAR

Producer: **CDS Micro Systems**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **Machine code**
Author: **Mike Sheppard**

*Castle Blackstar* was reviewed in the March issue of CRASH but appears here under the auspices of Adventure Trail because it has been revamped and relaunched. The program I have is dated July 84, but this is version 9.9 and the truth is, it has battled its way through the vagaries of the marketplace for almost a year to settle in the pastures of CDS; it appears now as a fine piece of software, not dated at all, and in keeping with the finest text-only traditions, with intelligent prose and consistent plot. It is set in that classic adventuring time zone of prehistory, that is, even before the wireless brought you the Goon Show.

Let's have a look at what the cassette cover has to say and you'll see what I mean. 'Imagine . . . as you awaken from your sleep troubled by strange dreams and visions you find yourself in a luxurious room furnished in silver and glass. The ceiling is high and arched with a huge relief map of the moon hanging overhead . . . woman speaking to you. She is tall and willowy with hair like spun silver. She carries easily an air of authority and wisdom.'



The relief map of the moon is explained by the fact that Artemis is the virgin goddess of the hunt and the moon, the twin sister of Apollo.

The objective of your quest is to return the power orb to Artemis but you can also score points through certain actions and by solving the many puzzles and finding the treasures to be taken back to be cleansed of their evil. Clearly, sophisticated scoring, as used here, is much fairer and more interesting than some recent games that have even stooped to an increased score with every new location visited.

Press any key on loading and you are in a valley surrounded on three sides by forest and you'd be well advised to take the easy route to begin with, west along the valley, unless you like to start off with a maze (equivalent to starting the day with cracking the ice on a lake for your early morning dip). Sadly, being a reviewer, I thought it my lot to take the metaphorical plunge but when I grew tired of wandering, keying in QUIT resulted in a NEW program. Needless





to say, I was not amused (the metaphorical cramps and almost drowning, arrgh!).

Along the dusty road, reading the keystone reveals the author and contributors which I found handy as there is no mention of them on the cover. West takes you to the infamous castle itself. If you are reading this review for clues, then I'm sorry, but it would be unethical for me to tell you how to get the drawbridge down — but yes, you're quite right, it is your first major problem. Kindly, the program does not impose a major impasse here for the eventual solution lies in the adjacent locations.

The descriptions are most evocative and the locations are the result of much prethought and careful design. As more and more of the story becomes known, the structure and intelligence behind the plot becomes gradually apparent. The rooms and halls of the castle are consistently real; living quarters, kitchen and dining room, ramparts and drawbridge are all where you might expect, and function in an authentic way.

The text forms a good narrative, and it is easy to visualise the castle as you move about it. Here is the description of the dining room: 'You are in a grand dining room with glorious decor and a huge chandelier. Above you is an overhanging gallery which overlooks the archway forming the west entrance. A somewhat less than inviting exit leads east.'

Vocabulary is good with few surprises. Simple commands such as ENTER, IN, OUT, UP and DOWN are widely accepted to enter all manner of buildings, facilitating quick and easy movement. Input goes a little beyond verb/noun with TAKE LAMP AND LIGHT IT and DROP SWORD AND LOOK while WEAR is a refinement of GET. Apart from SCORE and the inadvisable QUIT, the game features GOES which gives the number of turns taken so far; VERBOSE which gives the full location description and QUIET which only gives the full text for new locations. N.E., S.E. etc, and UP and DOWN make the castle and the mazes that surround it lengthy explorations.

*Castle Blackstar* is a super text adventure where the thought and careful planning behind its inception are most evident. The game is clever and consistent, well-designed, well-presented and with many ingenious and logical problems. If they don't make them like this any more, then it will be a shame.

## COMMENTS

**Difficulty:** Quite difficult
**Graphics:** None
**Presentation:** Good
**Input Facility:** Good
**Response:** Very fast
**General Rating:**
Atmospheric and well-designed, good value

| | |
|---|---|
| **Atmosphere** | 9 |
| **Vocabulary** | 8½ |
| **Logic** | 8½ |
| **Debugging** | 10 |
| **Overall value** | 8½ |

# VOTING FOR THE ADVENTURE CHART

The CRASH Adventure Chart has picked up considerably since we first introduced it, with more and more votes coming in every day! To make life easier for sorting, we are now providing a separate write-in form, so please use it for the Adventure Chart, and not the one included at the bottom of the Hotline details. If you are voting on both charts, you may send both forms together in the same envelope of course.

### How to register your votes

There seems to have been some confusion in the minds of voters for the Adventure Chart, so to clarify the situations, here's how we do it. You may vote for **as many titles as you wish** (not just five as in the Hotline Chart) and you may award any of them points out of ten. So, for instance, you might vote for seven titles giving each of them ten points if you think they are worth it, or only three and give them one each. These votes are then added up for each title and the total is divided by the number of people who voted for the program resulting in an aggregate figure. From these figures, the top thirty adventure games are taken in descending order.

Phoned-in votes are accepted over the Hotline **(0584 3015)** in the same way (please state that you are voting for the Adventure Chart at the beginning), and may also be written in letter form without the use of the coupon if you prefer.

### Adventure Chart Prize Draw

And don't forget that, like the Hotline Chart, you can win prizes! Each month we draw a winner from the voters, who receives £40 worth of software and a CRASH T-shirt, with four runners-up each getting a T-shirt and a mini-subscription to CRASH for three months.

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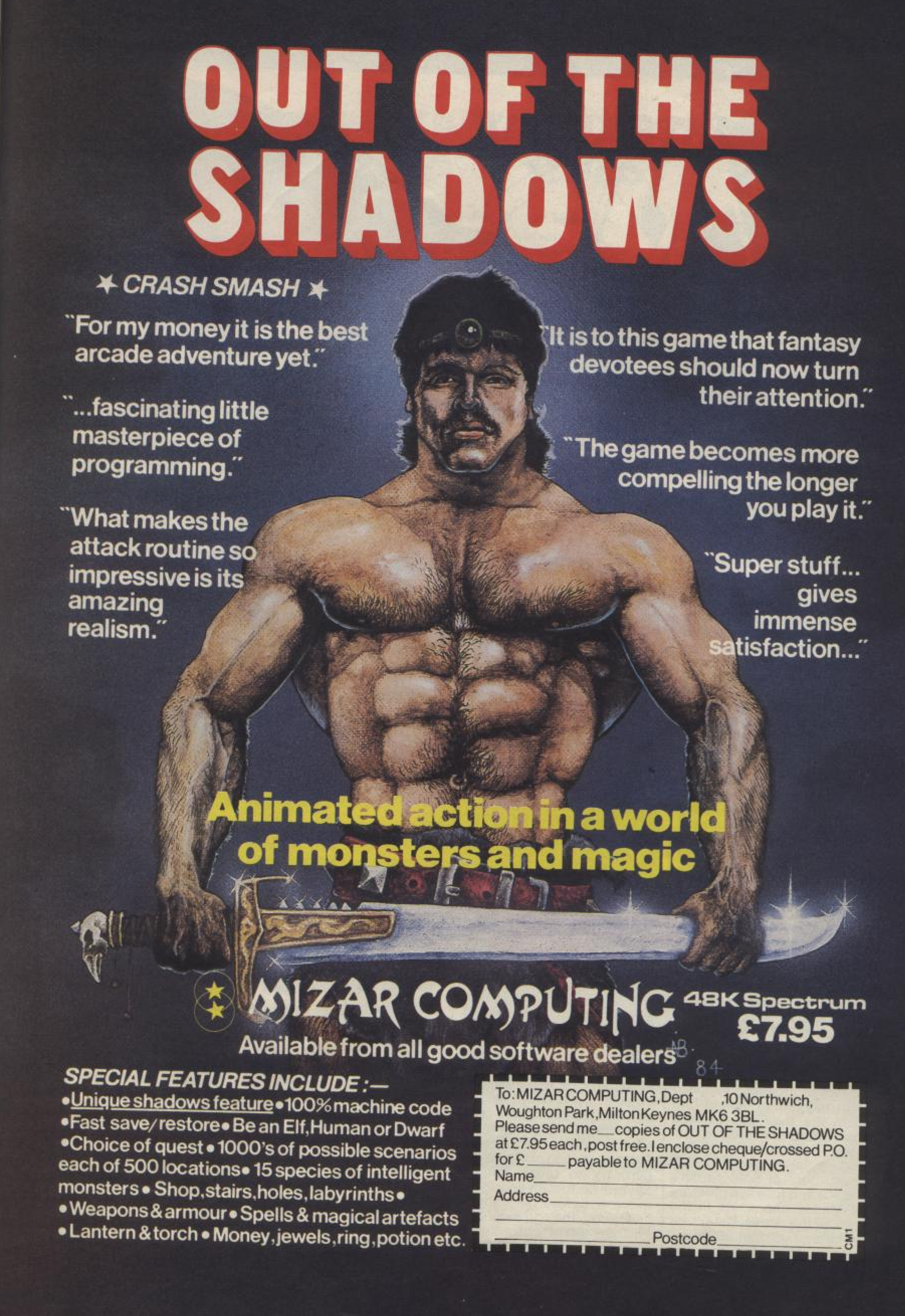
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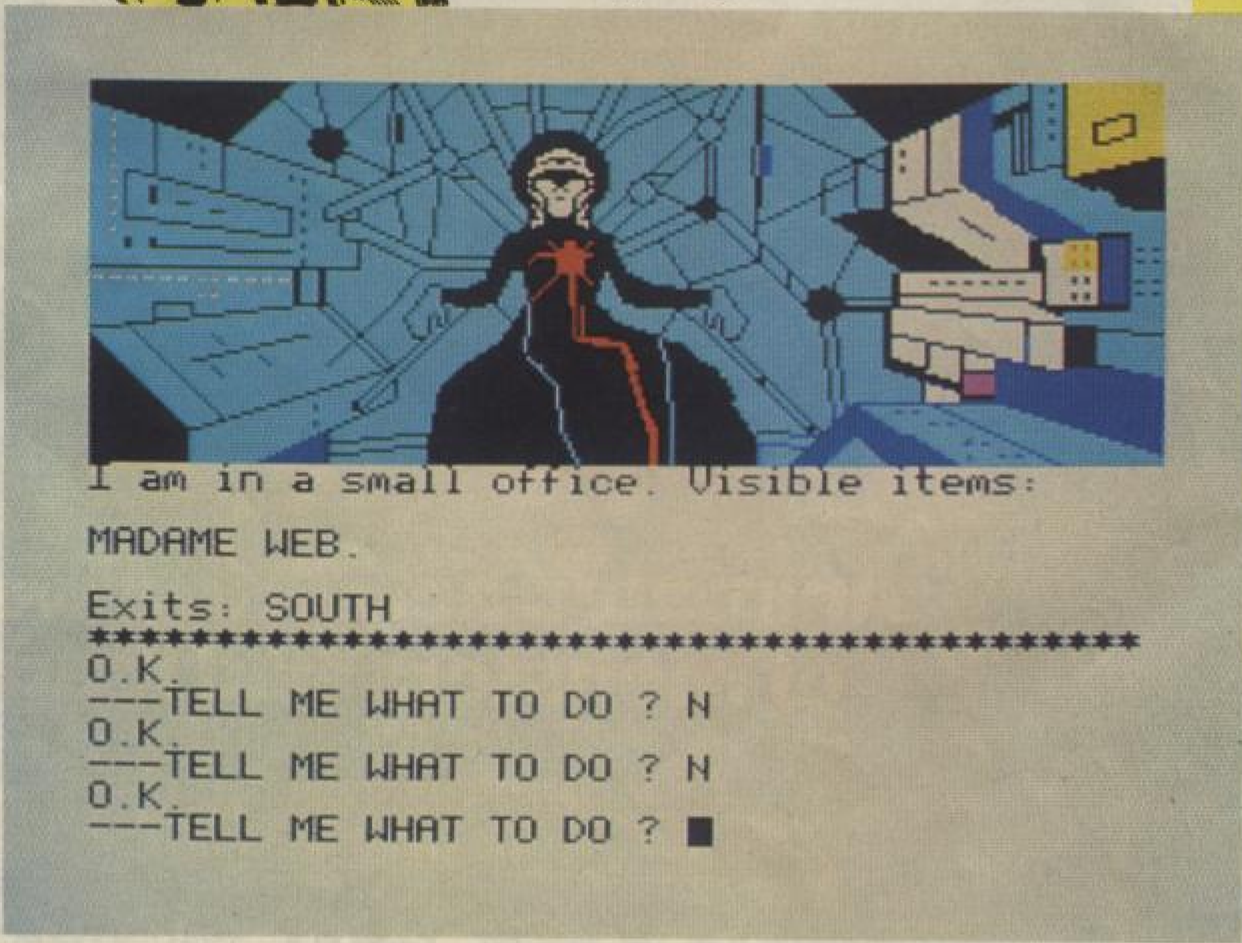

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# SPIDER–MAN



Producer: **Adventure International**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Scott Adams, conversion by Brian Howarth**




*Spider-man* follows *The Hulk* as the second instalment in the Questprobe link-up between Marvel Comics and Scott Adams marketed in the UK by Adventure International. In keeping with the theme, the background to the adventure and the loading instructions are contained within a comic which features a long comic strip episode entitled 'Mysterio times two!'. In it we learn how Peter Parker, a freelance photographer at the Daily Bugle in New York, dons a spider suit and uses his powers of spider-sense (which warns him of impending danger) and icky-sticky spider webbing to become Spider-man, a character often swinging spectacularly about skyscrapers in his never-ending fight against crime.

His assailant in this episode is the former Hollywood special effects designer Quentin Beck, otherwise known as Mysterio. He wields his power of hypnosis and illusion from behind a fishbowl helmet supplied with oxygen to isolate him from the thick gas emitted from his canisters which obscure Spider-man's vision and spider senses. We can learn more of Spider-man's friends and foes in a glossary of Marvel characters in the back of the comic. Details go as far as personal attributes such as Mysterio's five feet and eleven inches height, 175lbs weight, blue eyes and black hair.

Two unusual objects, and one imposing character, dominate the storyline. The objects are a natter energy egg and the other a bio-gem. The bio-gem is one of many such fragments each protected by an egg. Should the gem try to break free, or anyone be foolish enough to move it before neutralising its energy, the egg explodes. The dominant character is the Chief Examiner, familiar to those who have plaed *The Hulk*. At first Spider-man confuses the Examiner with Mysterio and hence the title 'Mysterio times two', but later realises, when he passes through the dark void of the Examiner's portal, that he represents a great power which oversees all the Marvel superheroes. It is here that Spider-man has his mind stripped of everything he knows, every experience, every thought, every sensation he has ever had is laid bare to the probing portal. To find out what goes on in the portal we are directed to the adventure program.

Following the comic strip, and after a brief introduction to what adventures entail, the comic goes on to give examples of valid sentence structures eg. TAKE GEM FROM THE AQUARIUM and TALK TO MADAME WEB along with the extremely useful (especially early on) TAKE EVERYTHING and DROP ALL. Continuing in this helpful mode a list of 24 useful words are provided.






If you are over the tender years of fourteen or so, and you are wondering why you should engross yourself in the antics of a cartoon super-hero then perhaps it's worth noting that these comic strips can be, in a self-deprecating fashion, genuinely amusing, much as the classic *Batman* TV Series. Spider--man, for example, must swing about the skyscrapers on a sultry summer's evening to keep cool wondering what sort of society has glamourous hero-types unable to afford an air conditioner. His finances are low because his editor at the newspaper wants something a little more than just shots of Spider-man in action (how exactly Spider--man can take pictures of himself is not explained).

The crux of the adventure is how you go about dealing with Spider-man's friends and foes from Madame Web, a friend with useful psychic powers, to the likes of Sandman, who can convert all or part of his body to sand, and the Ringmaster, another foe, who runs a circus of crime, hypnotising and robbing his audiences. Although the solution to the encounters with these characters can be gleaned from the informaton in the glossary, there are still one or two places which left me puzzled. Moving a crib is apparently beyond the powers of a superhero like Spider-man; there are one or two locations which lead to an abrupt 'something stops me' but I never quite worked out what; and, despite keen super senses, in the dark our hero falls and breaks his neck. There is one major programming niggle which you will most certainly come across. On picking up an object, or setting one down, the scene is taken from the screen momentarily and then redrawn so quickly it results in an awkward flash. Picking up several items quickly can leave you dazed by all the flashing. This is simply poor programming.

*Spider-man* is another good game from Scott Adams where the Marvel characters really give the game that edge. The graphics are superlative and capture the scenes right down to the smallest detail. The mix of comic book hero, fascinating plot and super graphics will ensure the game's success.

## COMMENTS

**Difficulty:** quite difficult
**Graphics:** in all locations, some repeated, generally excellent
**Presentation:** average
**Input facility:** accepts reasonably complex sentences
**Response:** fast
**General rating:** very good

| | |
|---|---|
| **Atmosphere** | 8 |
| **Vocabulary** | 8 |
| **Logic** | 8 |
| **Debugging** | 9 |
| **Overall** | 8 |

# KING ARTHUR'S QUEST

Producer: **Hill MacGibbon**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Five Ways Software**

Earlier this year a film of a famous book from the sixties, produced at great expense and supposedly the smash of '84 finally reached provincial cinemas. Despite great billing, it was quickly relegated to a smaller screen. Bad reviews, and the inevitable poor public response following closely behind were to blame. The film was 'Dune' (which, incidentally, I thought wasn't so bad) and it played second fiddle to a product fresh from the endless Spielberg production line.

*King Arthur's Quest* is, in some ways, rather similar. It is a finely constructed commercial package with Hill MacGibbon publishing a very smart product which has made space for itself along the computer shelves of one or two major department stores. The code on the tape is proficient enough and the graphics are interesting and colourful — but I'm afraid it will not meet with good reviews.

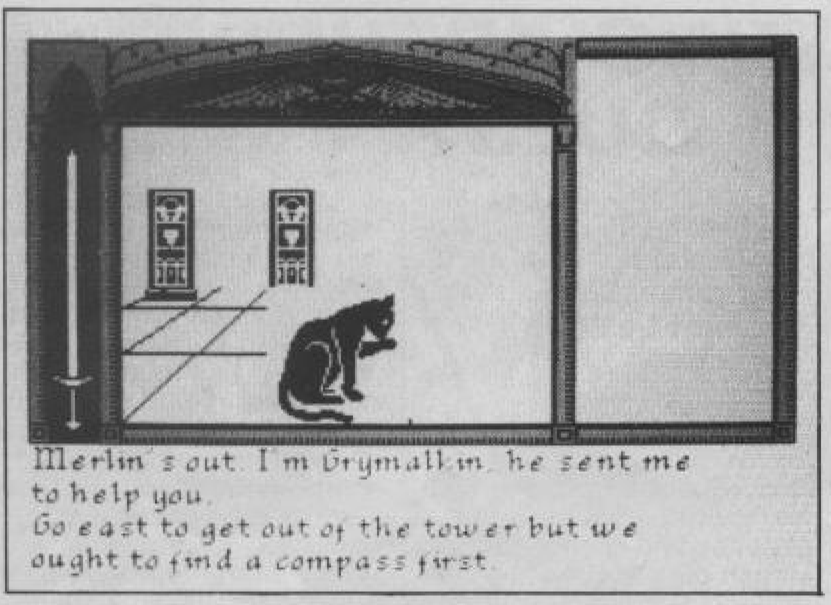
Not long after you start to play you get that uncanny feeling that you are the first person to play it. You'd love to write off to the author and suggest how such a clever idea might be developed, polished and made commercially sound. Alas, it is too late, and so here we have a new entrant onto the professionally incompetent software scene. Unlike early games software this program has good, high--class packaging, seemingly instructive manual and neat (if overlong) program presentation on the screen. What it doesn't have is an ounce of sense. Over the months, reviewing many games, I have developed much patience, but I got a little angry to find on playing this game that I'd just researched a right load of bilge.

Let's take the seemingly instructive glossy booklet contained in this large package. Commendably, it is well printed and very clearly laid out with sections on 'Getting Started', 'Exploring the Landscape' and 'Running the Program' giving details on the logistics of loading the Spectrum, mapping the adventure and working the game. It is only when you come to actually read the manual that you discover that either no-one checked it over, or that whoever *did* knew nothing about the game and, by inference, didn't want to know about the game. After struggling through the booklet, my guess is *you* won't want to know about the game either.

I was never one to excel in history at school (although, admittedly, schools are the last place to learn about anything) but what on earth has the Aztec world got to do with King Arthur? And why are the instructions inconsis-








tent and confusing? Diagrams, numbers and text do not match or attempt to link up, and if it wasn't for the consecutive page numbering you would assume that some pages had been removed.

Unfortunately, the game itself is also just a little off-the-rails, or to put it more bluntly, deranged! There are several different areas to the game, each consisting of a 10 x 10 grid. On the screen you can see two grid squares in front of you, and one to either side. After reading the manual you should be ready for anything, but as you begin mapping it becomes apparent that you are not where you are — or to be precise, you are somewhere else! You are in fact on the first square directly in front. You are looking at yourself in front of you. YES, I know, I'm becoming as incoherent as this program, so let's just leave it as: when you move adjacent to, say, a door, and you turn to face it and go through it it isn't there — it has seemingly moved down a block. With a little effort you soon get used to this glaring inconsistency, but why didn't the programmer do something sensible about it?

Although I didn't learn much geography at school, I began to get the hang of it when I left. It soon became clear that unless you position a map so that it points northwards, it is difficult to read and to get your bearings from it quickly. In the game you discover a compass early on and, like all the objects you collect, it is revealed on the right hand side of the screen. As you move it rotates to show you which way you are heading — but just to annoy those who are not such good map readers, it only shows north, when it would have taken minimal programming courtesy to have it indicate all directions. A minor point, admittedly, but you are still left wondering why it should be so unhelpful. Perhaps the sense of annoyance it creates is to do with the most damning point about this game. It is so boring you just want to get through it as quickly as possible, and after waiting for the sluggish response you can't wait to get on with you next move.

*King Arthur's Quest* is a huge disappointment. I warmed to the theme and certainly, the packaging (which includes a spell--breaker poster) is colourful and interesting. The programmer has brought some skill to bear on the project but what this game lacks is not programming time, but design time. It has been thrown together with what can only be described as glossy incompetence.

## COMMENTS

**Difficulty**: quite easy
**Graphics**: simple, often confusing
**Presentation**: average
**Input Facility**: single key entry
**Response**: reasonable
**Special Features**: played in real time
**General Rating**: original but boring

| | |
|---|---|
| **Atmosphere** | **5** |
| **Vocabulary** | **3** |
| **Logic** | **8** |
| **Debugging** | **10** |
| **Overall value** | **5** |



# FIRE ON THE WATER

Producer: **Arrow Publications**
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **Joe Dever and Gary Chalk**

Fire on the Water consists of a self-contained cassette (which can be bought separately through mail order) with a very instructive concertina inlay and a full role-playing book of the same name, Book Two in the 'Lone Wolf' series (*Flight from the Dark* was number one, while the third will be *The Caverns of Kalte*). With numbered paragraphs throughout, these books create something akin to a computer adventure where the options open to you at each turn lead went on to win the Advanced Dungeons and Dragons Championship in America in 1982. Gary Chalk began playing war games some years ago when only fifteen and has now turned his BA in design to good design to good effect in Cry Havoc, Starship Captain and Battlecars (co-designed with Ian Livingstone).

This is how we are introduced to Book Two. The Darklords invaded Sommerlund and destroyed the Kai Monastery but you, Lone




to different paragraphs. Action Charts, a Combat Result Table and a random number page form the machinery which drives the story along. Within the inside cover of the book lies a map of the Lastlands depicting some of the places mentioned in the inlay: the Kai Monastery, Holmgard and Durenor. Sparrow Books, the publishers, tell us something of the author and the illustrator. Joe Dever became a full-time musician and while on a business trip to Los Angeles discovered D&D, becoming so engrossed he

Wolf, survive the attack and travel to your King enthroned in the capital, Holmgard. Only one power can now save your people — the Sommersword, sword of the sun, bestowed upon the allies of Durenor to the east as a mark of allegiance that exists between the two kingdoms. In return the King of Durenor gave Sommerlund the golden ring known as the Seal of Hammerdal. If ever the shadow of the west should rise again, Durenor would come to the aid of Sommerlund.

On loading you see a

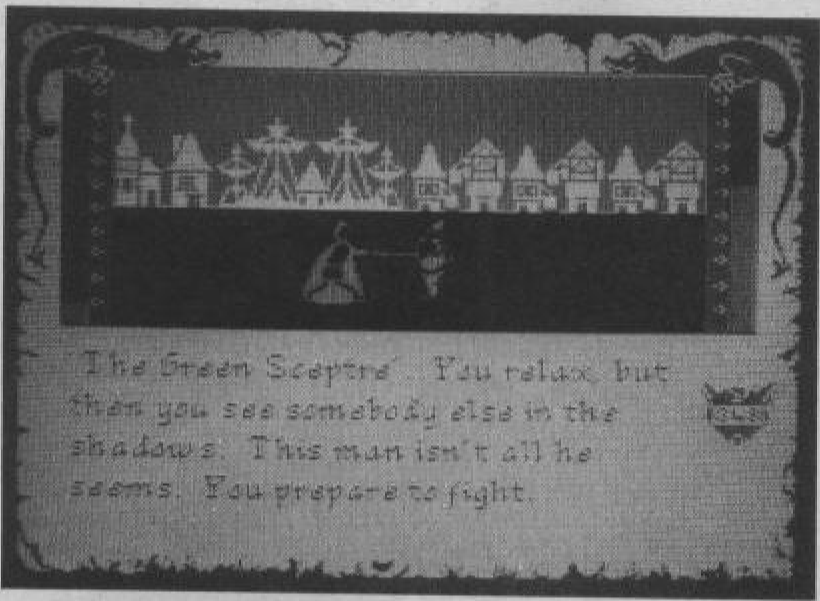
castle courtyard with fine detail of battlements, turrets, doors and ropes. The redesigned character set is in keeping with the flavour of the adventure. The text scrolls slowly upward through the bottom half of the screen after which a characters enters stage left, making a distinctive 'clip clop' sound — a noise which become familiar as it accompanies all movements by characters throughout the game. (The analogy with a stage is apt, since the backgrounds are indeed backcloths with only one, two or perhaps three characters moving along the front of the stage). Lone Wolf, who appears a distinguished chap with a cloak, is offered a choice of weapons between spear, sword or hammer but when you make your choice you should note that it is difficult to swipe with a spear or thrust with a hammer. NB: If you choose to fight with your hands, it is inadvisable to parry!

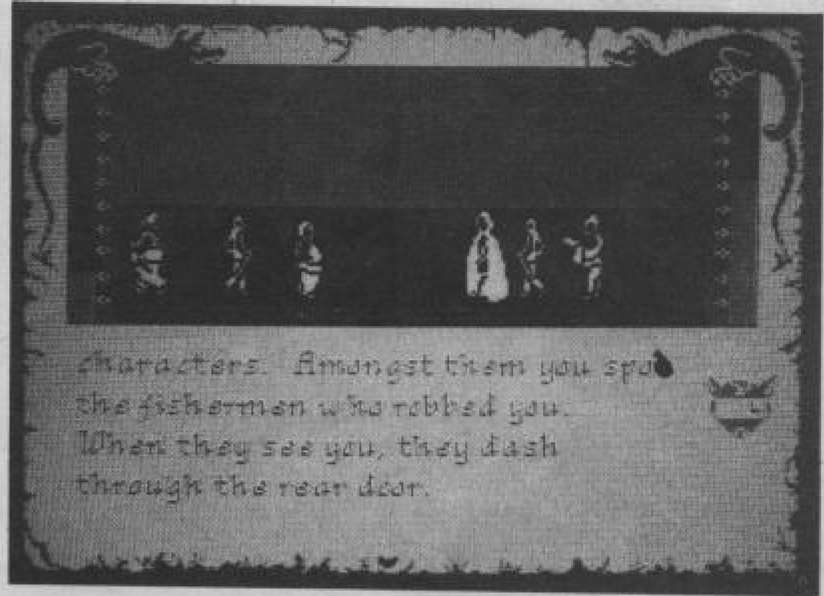
The significance of the terms SWIPE, THRUST and PARRY lie in their use a keywords on the keyboard overlay supplied with the game. Another keyword, CYCLE OPTIONS, scrolls the options open to you at any one stage, one by one, so you can press CHOOSE OPTION when the most attractive one appears. At this point I chose a sword to help Lone Wolf whereupon a sword appeared on the screen in his hands. Keeping CHOOSE OPTION depressed also cycles the spear and hammer through his hands if you are curious as to how they look. Pressing OBJECTS CARRIED tells me I have a sword and thirty-two gold coins in my pouch. As I progress I can carry up to eight items in my backpack.

The next choice is straightforward enough — off to train with the King's Guard which develops Combat Skill, shown by a bar along the left side of the screen. Training is completed when Lone Wolf loses his endurance (shown by a bar on the right) and the fight. Your first effort will no doubt, like my own, be ignominious because the keyword buttons STEP TOWARDS, STEP BACK, THRUST, SWIPE, CHOP etc take some getting used to. More mystical are the activities of Mind Blast which momentarily breaks the enemy's concentration and increases your Combat Skill, and Mind Shield whereby those creatures who use mind force against you find their powers curtailed.

In the bottom right of the screen is a wolf's head which bears a number. Numbers up to 350 correspond to episodes in the book. It won't take long after realising this to discover something rather fundamental governing the whole *Fire on the Water* project, principally, that the book develops the story to a far greater depth than does the software and in many cases provides more routes to explore the adventure to the full. Hence it can be said that not only does the book provide a more intricate plot but it also offers this for the price of £1.50. The implications are obvious to anyone with limited funds at their disposal.

*Fire on the Water* is something different for the adventurer. It is a précis of an accompanying role-playing book but it is not dependent upon it, and indeed the software, if need be, can be purchased separately. The quality of the graphics varies with the backdrop but they are always colourful. The first scene and many more which follow are highly detailed and well laid out. Movements of characters, and the occasional movement within the backdrops (eg the bird and the ship) are slow and give the whole a plodding, laboured feel. A small graphic of a cassette appears at the side of the screen at moments opportune for saving the game — and the opportunity should be seized, as the game cannot be restarted once you have lost a life.




The combat action is good with diagrams on the cover depicting exactly what stance is represented by CHOP, SWIPE, THRUST etc. Watching fights take place and guiding your character through them is the chief advantage the software has over the book. The book, however, wins on most counts with a greater depth to its storyline and the fact that it provides more routes through which the adventure may be explored. Although it's not strictly necessary to read the book to enjoy the software, a knowledge of the book does improve your play as familiarity with the larger picture can influence you route through the program.

## COMMENTS

**Difficulty:** Quite easy
**Graphics:** On all locations, and with moving characters
**Presentation:** Good
**Input facility:** Single key input
**Response:** A touch slow due to character movement
**Special features:** Real time combat, multiple choice adventure
**General rating:** Lacks the length and complexity of the book which outshines the software

| | |
|---|---|
| **Atmosphere** | 6 |
| **Vocabulary** | 4 |
| **Logic** | 6 |
| **Debugging** | 8 |
| **Overall value** | 5 |



# SEE-KAA OF ASSIAH

Producer: **Mastervision**
Retail Price: **£3.99**
Language: **Basic with some machine code**
Authors: **Les Hogarth and Clive Wilson**

*See-Kaa of Assiah* comes from Mastervision, famous for their takeover of the *Wrath of Magra* project and its subsequent marketing. I didn't think *Wrath of Magra* was a game which was developed to its full commercial potential, but alas *Se-Kaa of Assiah* has even less to offer the prospective purchaser. In fact it is so run-of-the-mill, and with so little creative invention, one wonders when Mastervision will stop floundering among the dead men and begin to realise that only quality will succeed in today's marketplace. Unlike music sales, software sales are not governed so much by taste — there is a definite good and a definite bad, despite what some magazines might lead us to believe.

When the Wise Ones ruled the land, produce was plentiful and the people happy. But then came the Dark Hordes, a mutated race of evil beings who wreaked havoc and destruction throughout the realm and stole the Great Artefacts of the Wise Ones. These were the Rod of Light, the Hammer of Vib-ra and the Casket of Vib-ra. Your quest is twofold: first you must endeavour to find the whereabouts of the Great Artefacts which have been hidden within the grim Castle of the Dead in the lands of Assiah; second, you must escape from the castle and locate the resting places of the Artefacts so that you can return them. Once the Artefacts are in their rightful place, the Wise Ones regain their lost powers and can defeat the Dark Hordes, restoring peace and contentment to the land. Access to the second part of the adventure is conditional upon successful completion of the first section.

The game accepts full English sentences such as TAKE THE CASKET OF VIB-RA, and multiple commands are allowed using AND, so GET THE CASKET OF VIB-RA AND GO NORTH is accepted. Some special commands are TAKE ALL or GET ALL, and DROP ALL. There is a pause option and you can repeat your last command. The two 48K programs have over 170 illustrated locations.

So far, so good — so what's wrong?

The first major irritation is the input routine. An input routine is as fundamental to an adventure as graphics are to an arcade game. The routine used in this case repeats a key amazingly quickly, so it is almost beyond the fidelity of a rubber keyboard to get an error-free input, even if it is a single character — in tests, nine out of ten 'E's (for EAST) came up as 'EE'. The locations suffer from feeble descriptions and the graphics, far from making up for this shortfall, are often uninteresting and of poor design. There aren't many problems, and those that can be found are illogical and their solutions arbitrary. After wandering for hours I finally found a way to kill the Guardian, only to find that no gain had been made, no new avenues to explore and no new objects — just one Guardian down.

Although two programs for £3.99 appears good value, I felt this package lacked any addictive quality. The first game largely consists of one long maze. It is not a game I will be returning to; 'nough said?

## COMMENTS

**Difficulty**: rather difficult, owing to lack of logic
**Graphics**: on all locations; unfortunately they replace text
**Presentation**: rather poor
**Input Facility**: awful auto repeat
**Response**: touch slow
**Special Features**: played in real time
**General Rating**: lacks addictive quality

| | |
|---|---|
| **Atmosphere** | 4 |
| **Vocabulary** | 5 |
| **Logic** | 4 |
| **Debugging** | 8 |
| **Overall Value** | 5 |

# THE SAGA OF ERIK THE VIKING

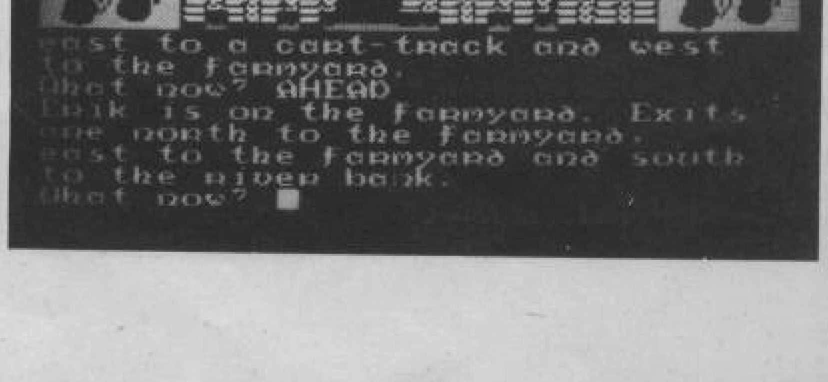


Producer: **Mozaic Publishing**
Price: **£9.95**
Language: **Machine Code**
Author: **Pete Austin**

This game represents the second saga of Erik the Viking, following the book by Terry Jones, and details the adventures of the famous warrior who lived by the North Sea with his family and servants in Norway one thousand years ago.

One day Erik went to check his land and make sure all the sheep were in for shearing. Following the river which flowed past his home he soon reached the snow-capped mountains where he sat for a rest. Dozing beneath the fir-trees he had a vision whereupon strange creatures swarmed over the farm dragging everyone, including his wife, away. You play the freshly awakened Erik who must travel in search of these evil Dogfighters to rescue his family. Over two hundred locations reveal authentic viking settlements with wizards, dragons and giants populating these strange lands.

Playing the game you quickly see just how easy it is to move around and it follows that this adventure will have a strong appeal for a young audience or those who find the idea of prolonged mental anguish curiously unrewarding. Objects are easy to find where they stand or on a brief search of the locality. Finding uses for them is a little more testing, but it won't be long before that super feeling of having cracked a puzzle will egg you ever onwards. As you might expect from a commercially





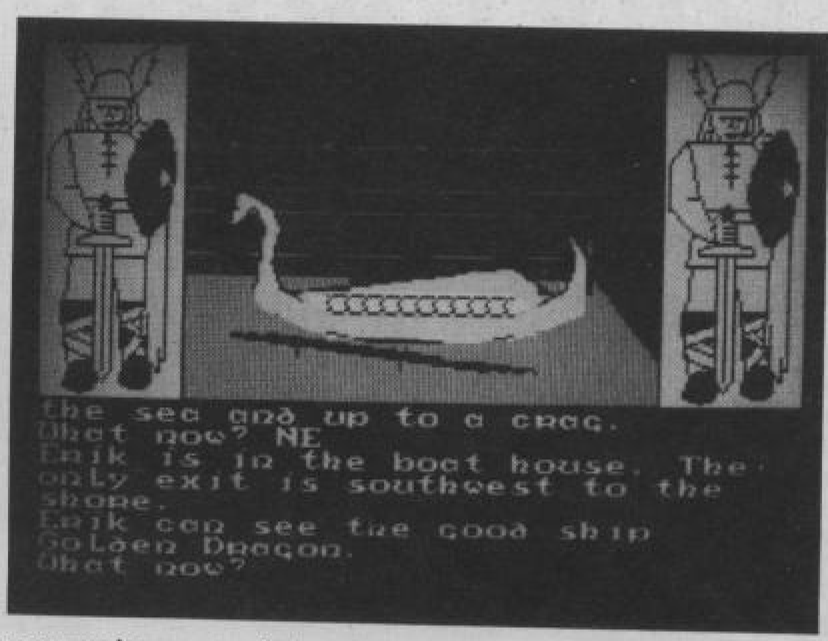


viable package and concept, there are no silly clangers to jar the sensibilities, no North Sea Oil Rigs looming out of the mists, only fully authentic stone saunas, viking ships and Scandanavian farm holdings with backdrops of tall mountains and deep fjords.

Not wishing to be thought a spoilsport, and to absorb myself in the role of Viking marauder, I didn't shave, or comb my hair, for a day; donned a thick woolly jumper, and leered at the landlady. Needless to say, the part came naturally enough (must be that easterly wind straight off the North Sea . . . brrr!)

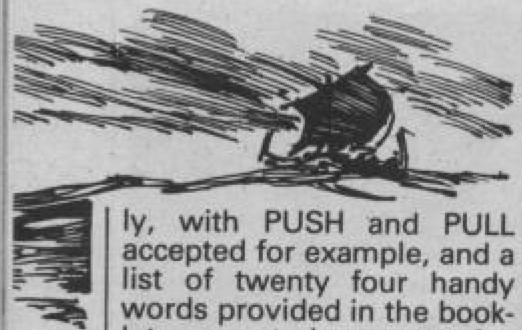
Included in the large, colourful packaging is a small, glossy booklet with details on playing the game along with some extracts from the hair-raising adventures taken from the book by Terry Jones including 'Erik and the Storm', 'Erik and the Sea Dragon' and 'Erik and the Dogfighters'. Dogfighters, in case you aren't already in the know, are peculiar dog-headed creatures who instill such fear in their foes that they win most of their fights straightaway: their opponents throw down their swords and cower on their knees, ready to be slaughtered by the hideous beasts.

Every location has a full, well-designed picture which often adds immensely to




your enjoyment of the adventure as they are really colourful and attractive. For efficiency in drawing, and to give the screen a fine layout, the picture is flanked on either side by a character who must be none other than Erik himself — he looks fearsome enough. Despite the reduced canvas, the graphics are still slow, but an option is provided through the words PICTURES and WORDS. With only WORDS, action is very fast and given there are so few barriers to overcome, you can really zip along. The character set used to display the text has been tastefully redesigned, and is both attractive and highly legible. However, owing to the constraints placed on available memory by all those detailed pictures, the quantity of text is always limited. Vocabulary is friend-





ly, with PUSH and PULL accepted for example, and a list of twenty four handy words provided in the booklet proves to be very useful. Response to input can be random, so don't be fooled into thinking that 'I almost understand' has any significance — it hasn't. More honest are the 'Try again' and 'Try other words' responses.

Since the colourful pictures (which might have been designed on another computer, which would explain the odd colour shadings) take up so much of the memory that it is not only the quantity of text which suffers. Structurally the game is flat. Only useful objects can be examined, thus those which won't stand up to examination do not really exist, and only provide decoration.

*The Saga of Erik the Viking* is a thoroughly well-presented software package with a distinct and imaginative theme delivered in a competent, attractive manner. Given the peculiar familial relations inversion brought upon by the microcomputer (it is Dad who must wait until after lunch for young Tommy to show him how it's done), it would be unwise to say the instructions are so clear that a child could understand them. Overall, the game brings an endearing story to life both colourfully, through the entertaining graphics and theme, and in a form which is accessible to everyone as the problems it presents are not difficult.

### COMMENTS

**Difficulty:** quite easy
**Graphics:** good, and on all locations
**Input Facility:** usually verb/noun
**Response:** very fast, but graphics are slow
**General Rating:** very good

| | |
|---|---|
| **Atmosphere** | 8 |
| **Vocabulary** | 8 |
| **Logic** | 9 |
| **Debugging** | 8 |
| **Overall Value** | 8 |

# ADVENTURELAND



Producer: **Adventure International**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Scott Adams, Conversion by Brian Howarth**

The inlay which drops out of the case when you open it lists thirteen games starting with No. 1, *Adventureland* and ending with No. 13, *The Sorcerer of Claymorgue Castle*. Under the heading 'The Adventures' it extols the virtues of adventure No. 1, *Adventureland*. There is so little of it I may as well quote, 'Wander through an enchanted realm and try to uncover the 13 lost treasures. There are wild animals and magical beings to reckon with as well as many perils and mysteries. The Adams Classic that started it all! Difficulty level: Moderate.'

Hardly a deep plot (find 13 treasures) and no theme to speak of. This adventure is not bad in the sense that it is well-programmed with the unmistakable Brian Howarth style made famous in the Digital Fantasia series, but I can't help but think this game will polarise opinion; if you're a Scott Adams fanatic you'll buy it as a collectors' piece, if not, you might wonder what all the fuss is about for this adventure offers you nothing that you haven't seen before and offers one or two things you would rather not see again. Yes, it features a wonderfully convoluted and totally unnecessary maze.

If you have been anaesthetized by the countless dream factory TV films and soap operas emanating from across the Atlantic, the American spelling in this adventure may not irritate you in the slightest (ax for axe) but I'll doubt whether many people will know what chiggers are without consulting a good dictionary (they are parasitic larva mites). If the program doesn't like what you've input it comes up with 'I must be stupid, but I don't understand what you mean.' At the edge of a bottomless hole you see a large outdoor advertisement. If you then READ ADVERT you get 'Check with your computer dealer for the next adventure program: Pirate Adventure. If they don't carry Adventureland have them call' what looks like a Birmingham number.

As with Digital Fantasia's programs you are offered the choice between graphics and seeing which objects are present, and for that matter, what location you are in. It's very tempting to play without the graphics which to be honest are nothing special, just average. The location descriptions are short and unimaginative. Humour is evident when for all your efforts you end up in memory chip in a computer.

*Adventureland* is a competent work with fast responses, a good, sound, input routine and a famous name, Scott Adams. Since this was, or is, the first game in the series it would be a little unfair to say something like 'beats me what all the fuss is about,' so I won't say it.



**ADVENTURE TRAIL REVIEW RATINGS**

**ATMOSPHERE:** reflects quality of location description and graphics and how credibly characters behave.

**VOCABULARY:** the completeness of the vocabulary and friendliness of response. All words and associated words (objects etc) in location descriptions should be included.

**LOGIC:** reflects the logic of the problems encountered and whether or not you are likely to be killed without warning or chance of escape.

**DEBUGGING:** indicates the level of crashproofing. A program should not be crashed simply by making an incorrect entry or by pressing an unfortunate combination of keys.

**OVERALL:** general rating based on price and the other ratings BUT NOT AN AVERAGE OF THE OTHER RATINGS.

### COMMENTS

**Difficulty:** easy
**Graphics:** all locations, mostly good
**Presentation:** rather messy, black on white, hard on the eyes
**Input facility:** two word input
**Responses:** very fast but the substance is often stupid
**General rating:** quite good

| | |
|---|---|
| **Atmosphere** | 7 |
| **Vocabulary** | 7 |
| **Logic** | 7 |
| **Debugging** | 10 |
| **Overall value** | 7 |




**After the phenomenal popularity of** *Lords of Midnight*, its sequel, *Doomdark's Revenge* now looks set to become the new adventure favourite. Graham Fulcher **from Norfolk writes a rather informative letter about the game which will be of particular interest to** Richard Normington **from Bradford who wrote asking how to use the magic weapons found in the game. If you prefer to discover all the secrets of Icemark for yourself I have marked the end of this letter by a row of asterisks. Graham writes:**

To date, I have discovered 129 characters (although the very similar names of some of the characters means I may have omitted some and included some that do not exist). The characters are made up as follows:

25 Giants
15 Barbarians
20 Dwarfs
45 Icelords
20 Fey
plus Tarithel, Luxor, Morkin and Rorthron

There are many special items, including:

The Crown of Varanand (persuasion)
The Runes of Finom (protection)

and many items which are useful in battle and which all belong to characters but, in general, are not owned by them. When those characters owning special weapons enter a magic area they are often told of the location of their weapon. I believe characters only properly use their own weapons, and other characters who possess these weapons are given (if sufficiently generous) the option of returning them to their rightful owners if they meet them. In general:

Giants own hammers
Barbarians own spears
Dwarves own axes
Icelords own swords
Fey own bows

A character can carry only one special item.

The underground passages seem to be a way of travelling between places without running the risk of entering a battle and are, I find, particularly useful for ensuring Luxor's survival.

Unlike *Lords of Midnight*, in *Doomdark's Revenge* the wandering monsters (skulkrin, wolves etc) cause problems to armies and can soon reduce their numbers.

The 'Approach' option should be used with caution as it puts you at a disadvantage compared with 'attack' if a battle ensues. It should only be used after studying the two involved characters' personalities.

**Continuing a theme from last month Graham writes:**

In the last issue you talked about graphics. I think Beyond have shown the real future of adventures. Not only must graphics become more functional, but I believe we will see the end of the word matching type of adventure, which does not really test logic, but literary power. It is very easy to work out what to do in adventures, the hard part is explaining it to the computer.

I think this is a view most readers of **Signpost** would disagree with. Poor quality adventures may be just word matching, but the better ones certainly are not.

**More constructively,** Craig Lemon **writes:**

Adventures should have detailed, atmospheric location descriptions, objects that can be examined, more than verb/noun inputs, recognition of all words used in text, a useful HELP facility and graphics only for maps, signs or charts — and then only if they serve a purpose.

**On the subject of a HELP facility,** P A Storah **disagrees and writes:**

Adventure games should not have a help key unless the game has a partner for you as in *Inferno* or *The Hobbit*. (**This is certainly a more logical approach, unless of course you have an augury spell! -DB**). The location descriptions should be precise, but short. On the inlay card there should be a list of every word it understands (**I now totally agree with this; it would go a long way to eliminating the problems described by Graham Fulcher -DB.**)

**There has been a trend of making competitions of adventures, sometimes offering huge prizes. However, with the possible exception of the** *Ket trilogy* with its more modest prize, the games have been exceptionally difficult and to a certain extent I get the feeling the games were compromised for the competition. I'd be interested to hear what you think. Do you think that competitions result in inferior games, or do you think the added incentive contributes extra excitement to an adventure?

For the benefit of any new readers of Signpost, to decipher the solutions to problems listed, simply rotate each letter backwards one place in the alphabet. eg N becomes M, etc.

*The Hulk*, with its excellent graphics, has proved a very popular adventure. James Betteridge **is one of many adventurers having difficulty leaving the dome at the start of the adventure. Actually James, there is no door. You'll kick yourself when you read the answer:** HP PVU

**In the same game and in another dome,** Lee Oakden **from Milton Keynes is struggling desperately to cut the wax into a shape to block the gas outlet. Try** QMVH PVUMFU XJUI XBY.

Jason Cutler **of Salisbury asks:**

How can I pass the barrier or oak door in *Smugglers Cove*?

**To move the Barrier you first need the spade from the lower cave system, and then** EJH CBSSJFS VTJOH TQBEF. **As for the door, it's simply locked!**

**Artic adventures, and their earlier ones in particular, have always been very popular.** Simon Yarwood **asks about** *Ship of Doom*:

How do you melt the ice around the figure, and how do you make the sonic screwdriver work?

**Don't bother with the ice! As for the screwdriver, try** QPJOU TPOJD

**In** *Espionage Island*, **another of the Artic favourites,** Mark Conrop **of Birmingham is having difficulty passing the tank. Actually Mark, it must be destroyed. Go to the hut and** TXJUDI TXJUDI, **go to the clearing,** SFNPWF MJHIU, JOTFSU QMBTUJD, **go to the hut and** TXJUDI TXJUDI.

**In Artic's latest game** *Eye of Bain*, Merlin the Maga **(an ardent** *Avalon* **fan) is still tied to a pole. This problem caused me a lot of trouble, and delayed the review by a month. Try** MJGU QPMF.

Malcolm Buchanan **is having difficulty in** *Kentilla*, **and asks:**

How do you get past the ward of disintegration north of the iron staircase in the Black Tower?

**As hinted at by the Carawood Oracle, you will need** WFMOPS'T TUBGG. **For all those meeting their death in Caradoom, try carrying the** SBUUMJOH RVBSH.

**At the other side of Caraland,** Sean Murphy **from Harrow Weald is having difficulty launching the boat into the Serpent Sea. Try** QVTI CPBU JOUP TFB.

Chris Thomas **of Upton, Chester asks:**

In which location is the small key in *Fantasia Diamond*? I have to rely on getting it from other characters.

**Actually Chris, I think the game starts with the key in the possession of the Elf.**

**On the same game** Marcos Sullivan **from Bristol writes:**

I am helpless in *Fantasia Diamond*. I've killed the Guardian and found Boris, but desperately need to find the Baton; where is it? Also I just can't pull the lever and neither can anyone else. I would be grateful for any help.

**All will be revealed if you** TBZ UP CPSJT "QVMM MFWFS".

**Still on this game,** G S Inns **is having difficulty lifting the manhole cover. To achieve this you will need help from the** SPCPU.

**G S Inns is also having trouble with British Rail. No, it's not strikes again! He's simply trying to get to Leatherhead in** *Sherlock*. **As I stated in my review of the game, you must get the train from Kings Cross, and as early as possible. However, I still don't believe trains ever actually ran between Kings Cross (which is the terminus for the north and east of England) and Leatherhead!**

**Also on** *Sherlock*, Ronan Culham **of Dublin is having trouble entering the London houses of Tricia and Basil. I'm afraid I can't be of help here, but I'm sure there are proficient burglars somewhere who could offer assistance.**

Geraint Evans **is having difficulty getting down the ski slope in the excellent adventure,** *Valkyrie 17*. **Unlike most adventures,** *Valkyrie 17* **gives information in the graphics which is not revealed in the text. To get down the ski slope you will need both the skis and the ski poles.**

**Simon Yarwood is having difficulty at the start of** *Snowball*, **and asks:**

How do you escape from the area full of blue and green morgues?

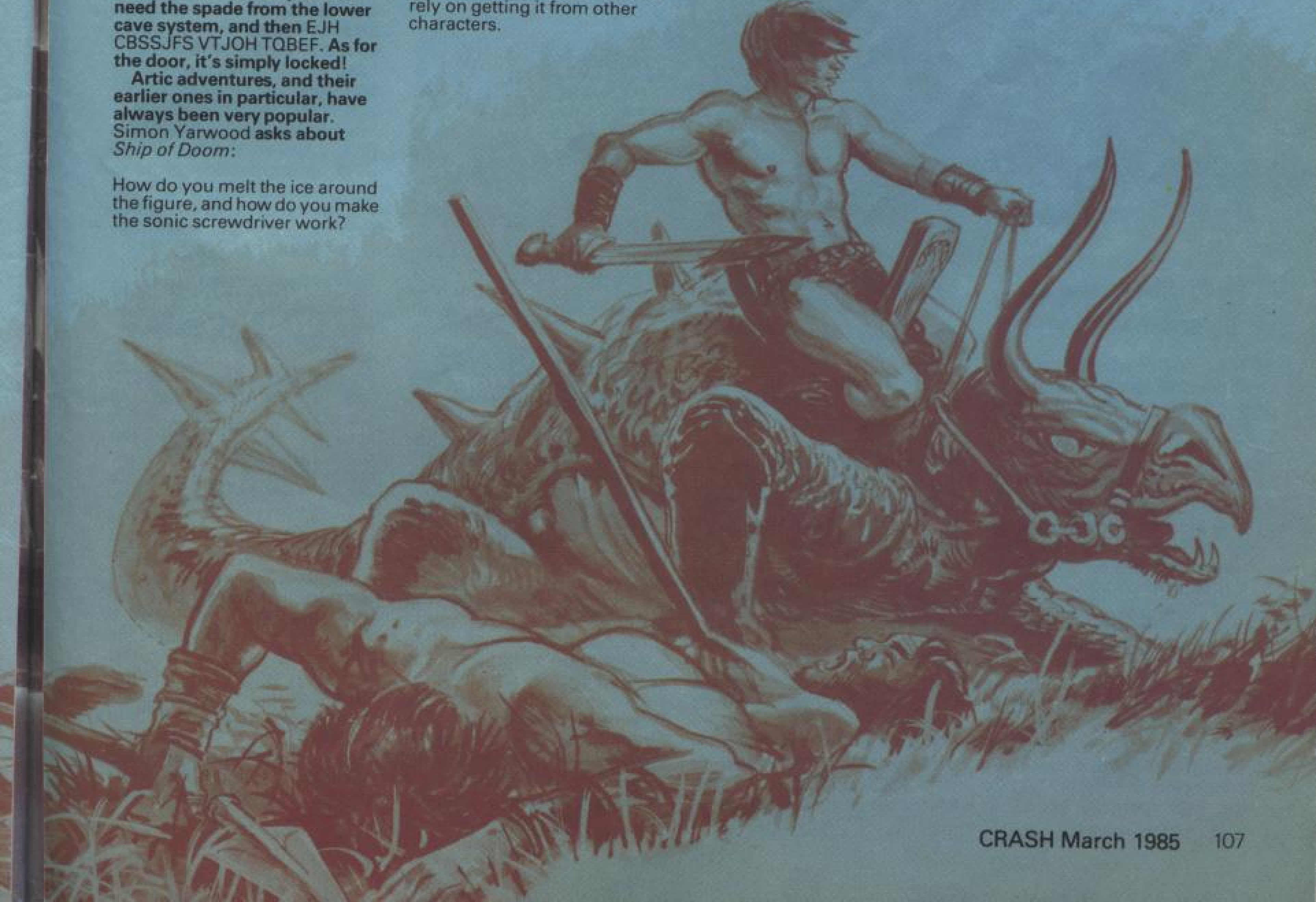
**To exit that particular level you will need to use the trapdoor in the lift.**

J H Morrison **of Newcastle asks:**

In *Message from Andromeda* what do you do with the glowing sphere on the raised pedestal which is behind the panel?

**Try** HFU TQIFSF, UBLF JU UP UIF PUIFS QFEFTUBM, QVU TQIFSF PO QFEFTUBM, SPUBUF TQIFSF.

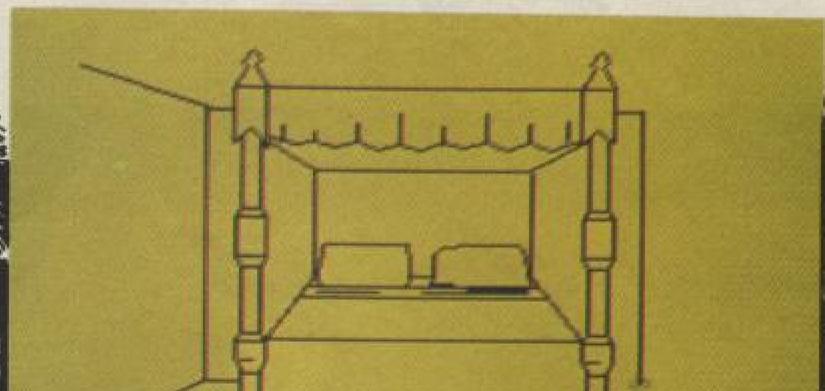
**This month's £12 of software is won by** Graham Fulcher **of Norfolk.**



# THE ILLUSTRATOR

## Franco Frey exchanges The Quill for a brush...

It is seldom that a utility program which is readily available to the end-user is taken seriously and put to earnest use for creating marketable software, but Gilsoft's *The Quill* is a remarkable exception and has proven to be a very popular professional tool for creating exciting text adventures. To the dislike of many traditional adventure players the market is swinging towards the more popular graphical adventures, not to speak of the rogue arcade adventures, and this has caused some concern to the bequilled software writers. Many of these have already extended the Quill's facilities with their very own in- house graphics utilities, but now Howard Gilberts has released the official Quill graphics creator, *The Illustrator*. This program links up to the Quill database and provides full picture editing facilities. *The Illustrator* combines the graphics with the database of The Quill and saves these in such a way that using LOAD"" from Basic will cause an autorunning graphic adventure to load into the Spectrum.




On it's way to become. .



. . . this




### POSSIBILITIES

The Quill/Illustrator combination enables the creation of a graphical adventure with full-screen (255 x 175 pixels) pictures. Up to 254 pictures may be created. The program can be set to normally draw the picture only on the first visit of a location (Flag 29 is scanned by The Illustrator interpreter and if SET the picture is drawn and the flag cleared). The picture may be recalled whenever REDESCRIBE is used by the player (The REDESCRIBE entry in the Event table has to be altered for this). Split screens, ie combining picture and text, is not possible. The amount of pictures in the adventure is only limited by the free memory space, in theory every single location may have a picture, but under normal circumstances graphics will have to be limited and the interesting locations chosen, which are to contain graphics. The Illustrator is designed to add graphics to a C-series database,i.e. a database saved from a C-series Quill. The serial type of the Quill can be gleaned from the opening screen (A03,C02). A-series databases may be however converted to C-series with a special conversion routine "A-CCONVERT"provided on the cassette provided there is at least 990 bytes of free memory.

### BASIC PROCEDURE

Starting point is the Quill. The adventure is designed in the normal way and suitable graphical locations pinpointed for later creation. The REDESCRIBE entry in the Event table may be modified to enable the redrawing of a picture on call-up when re-entering a previously visited location . The created database is then saved from The Quill with the name of the final adventure. Using The Illustrator, a suitable blank graphic database is created with the LOAD database facility. The pictures are created using the Graphics Editor of The Illustrator. Any locations which do not have graphics are defined as subroutines and the graphics database saved to tape. The Quill database and the graphics database are combined with the SAVE Adventure routine of The Illustrator, which also finally saves the adventure as an independent game to tape. All that is left to do is the final testing of the game to make sure it is absolutely bug-free.

### THE DRAWING TECHNIQUE

As memory space is restricted, the graphics are not stored as voluminous screens in memory. The technique used in The Illustrator is that of storing a string of drawing commands, which the Graphics interpreter lodged within the final game will recognise and execute. The picture will therefore be drawn by invisible hand the same way it was programmed within the editor, but at a much faster speed. The graphics editor provides all the necessary operations such as setting paper and ink colour, moving and positioning the drawing cursor, plotting individual points, drawing lines and



filling areas or spaces with solid colour or texture. Once the basic picture is programmed, corrections and additions may be made with an ingenious editor facility. The editor single steps through the exisiting drawstring and executes each command step by step. At any given point new commands may be inserted with the remainder of the picture to follow. A special subroutine is provided for drawing repetitive objects such as doors, windows etc and these may be called up within the drawstring with a simple command. To make this facility more useful, the object may be drawn at up to 8 different scales to accommodate the specific circumstances.

## THE MAIN MENU

The Illustrator has to perform several tasks and the function blocks may be accessed via the Main Menu. Following the required sequence LOAD database (option G) loads the first few bytes of the Quill database in order to know how many locations are contained in the adventure and to establish the whereabouts of the first free memory locations. The required number of graphic locations will be initialised. This is either required for setting up a new adventure or to amend the graphic database if changes have been made to the original Quill database.

Graphics Start Table (option B) is used to set the status of a picture. The initial Global background colours have to be set up. All locations in the adventure which do not require a picture should be Amended as a subroutine. The status of the pictures can be printed to the screen or to the printer.

Program: **THE ILLUSTRATOR**
Supplier: **GILSOFT**
**Retail price: £14.95**

Bytes Spare (option C) displays the number of bytes between the end of The Illustrator or the end of The Quill database and the bottom of the graphic database.

Graphics (option A) leads to the major work area, where the picture is created using the Graphics Editor. Pictures may be inserted, amended, printed or have their length calculated.

SAVE Graphics (option D), VERIFY Graphics (option E) and LOAD Graphics (option F) provide the facility of storing the partly or fully completed Graphics database to tape and to reload for a further work session.

## THE GRAPHICS EDITOR

The Editor provides four groups of commands; Editing, Drawing, Colour and Subroutine commands.

The Editing commands position of the drawstring pointer within the drawstring. S (START) puts the drawstring pointer at the start of the drawstring. N (NEXT) executes the next available drawstring command: if there isn't one the command is ignored. 9 (PREVIOUS) moves the drawstring pointer back one command and updates the screen. Shift & 0 deletes the previous command in the drawstring and re-establishes the picture to the condition prior to the deleted command. This 'rubber' feature enables comfortable experimenting of draw commands. Shift & N deletes the next command if there is one. Extra to these editing commands there is the Y (GRID) command which toggles an attribute or character grid on and off. This allows accurate positions of colour boundaries to be taken account of while drawing.

The Drawing commands operate with a two cursor system. The Base Cursor (BC) shows the last point plotted, moved etc., the Rubber Cursor (RC) shows the next position of the Base cursor or the point for a fill. The Rubber cursor is moved around the screen using the keys grouped around S. It moves a pixel at a time and can be speeded up by pressing Shift at the same time as a direction. At the bottom of the screen is the Status Box which contains the current X and Y co-ordinates and the number of the location currently being edited. The bottom row displays the current values of INK, PAPER, FLASH, BRIGHT, INVERSE and OVER. P (PLOT) sets the pixel at the position of the Rubber Cursor according to Inverse and Over. M (MOVE) moves BC to RC without affecting the screen. This is coded as a relative offset from BC and therefore care must be taken not to insert draw commands at a later date as it will affect the outcome of the picture. L (LINE) draws a straight line from BC to RC. F (FILL) causes the area which contains RC to be filled with set pixels. No notice is taken of Inverse or Over. T (SHADE) allows areas to be filled with one of 255 shading patterns. No printout is available in the manual, so some experimentation will be necessary. Shift T will affect also the boundary area (covers the outline). H (BLOCK) causes a block of the currently selected colours to appear between the BC and RC character positions. R (FREEHAND) toggles the freehand facility on and off. The cursor movement is treated as a pencil movement and each pixel plotted according to Inverse and Over. The FREEHAND feature should be used very sparingly as it eats up a lot of memory. The aforementioned draw commands should cover most needs, although what does seem to be missing is a CIRCLE command. This is a shame, as the only way around this shortcoming is to imitate a circle with a polygon or with memory--expensive freehand drawing.

The Colour commands are straightforward. The current INK is set to the value of the key pressed and includes INK 8 which causes all ink to be taken from the existing screen. The current PAPER is set in a similar fashion to INK, but with SYMBOL SHIFT. Paper 8 as in Basic. V sets a new FLASH value, B a new BRIGHT value (0,1 or 8). I and O toggle INVERSE and OVER on and off.

The Subroutine command requires a picture number and a scale value. This can be from 0 (No scale) to 7 where the number indicates the size of the picture in eighths. Scale only affects certain draw commands. These are MOVE, LINE, FILL and SHADE. BLOCK and FREEHAND commands will not be scaled or relocated and should generally not be used in subroutines. Subroutine calls can be nested to a level of ten.

## PRACTICE

The introduction to the working technique of The Illustrator is very clear and easy. The manual, which consists of a 28 page A5 booklet guides the user through a working session with the aid of the well known DEMO adventure encountered in the Quill. A partly completed Graphics database GRAPHICS is contained on tape and may be loaded, the missing picture of the hall designed following the instructions carefully and the two databases combined and stored to tape via the SAVE Adventure facility. This example should introduce the user to the general procedure. The detailed description of the individual utility blocks such as the Interpreter, the Graphics Database, the Main Editor and the Graphics Editor follow in the next section and should give an answer to any pending question. Listed are also all the Editor error messages which can be encountered. In the Appendix there is an explanation on the required Series conversion and a general approach to the design of a location picture. A summary of the Graphic Editor commands provides a quick reference.

## ILLUSTRIOUS ILLUSTRATOR

The Illustrator extends the capabilities and applications of The Quill. It provides a very easy means of creating graphics and combined with the excellent Quill enables a lot of people to design outstanding adventures without too much technical knowledge. It is perhaps this feature which has made the Quill such a success in the text adventure market, where writers with a flair for intrigue and mystique have been able to create characterful adventures without the fuss of having to handle machine language. Perhaps the Illustrator's only disadvantage is that it could lead to a plethora of repetitively styled adventures due to it's relatively inflexible display format. It will be up to the adventure writer to avoid this pitfall and to demonstrate the inbuilt versatility of the system.



# LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

*Rosetta McLeod, aided by Daniel Fenn, aged 4*

Many people have an educational motive in mind when they set out to purchase a micro-computer. To justify the monetary outlay, they may have had to convince themselves that the purchase is not a frivolous one, that the computer will not be used merely for playing games, but will be put to worthwhile use. If you are a parent, you may have been 'conned' by your child into buying a micro 'to help with schoolwork' — indeed most of my pupils admitted to me (but perhaps would not admit to their parents!) that this was the case, but that the reality of the situation was that they used their computers solely for the playing of simulations, arcade or adventure games.

Now, however, more and more publishers are producing software aimed at the education market, the majority of programs being specifically intended for use in the home rather than in schools — though an increasing number of schools are now making use of them. These educational programs fall into several categories:

**1** programs which encourage parents to work with the very young child who is ready to learn the letters of the alphabet, basic reading skills, number work, etc;
**2** tutorial-type programs which pick up an educational concept that the older child is familiar with, and attempt to reinforce it by providing a variety of examples to be worked through, usually at graded levels of difficulty;
**3** teach yourself programs — eg how to sail —, aimed at anyone, child or adult, who wants to learn a specific skill;
**4** adventure games, like the Hill-MacGibbon *Games to Stretch the Mind*, aimed at a younger audience. These are primarily leisure games, though they may have a secondary educational role, particularly if the child is helped by and adult who, through discussion, can guide the child towards working out the eventual solution.

What all these programs do is to cash in on the child's fascination with the computer. The sheer novelty value of using the machine usually results in increased motivation and the development of a greater concentration span. The programs often exploit the popular arcade game's format, so making work which is normally mundane and repetitive appear more interesting. Attractive presentation alone, appeals to children very strongly.

How, then, should we assess the educational games on offer? What criteria can we use when judging them? Obviously, any game which purports to have a worthwhile educational aim should have that aim clearly explained, and ideally, educationalists should have been involved in its preparation. Software which demands a simple YES/NO response from children should be avoided, as it doesn't really teach anything. The instructions, both in an accompanying booklet and on the screen, must be clear and easy to follow. Games ought to have several levels in order to cater for children of varying abilities, and should include suggestions for follow-up activities. All too many games, however, are presented as entities in themselves with no suggestions as to how the knowledge acquired can be extended or applied to other situations.

The following reviews cover games listed in the first category given earlier — those aimed at the very young child. Parents are often unsure as to how much they should be teaching a child who hasn't started school. It is important that the program package should give some reassurance or advice — preferably driving home the point that children mature at vastly different rates and reminding parents that a game described as being suitable for 4-6 year olds may well be beyond the abilities of some 4 year olds, who are simply not ready for it.

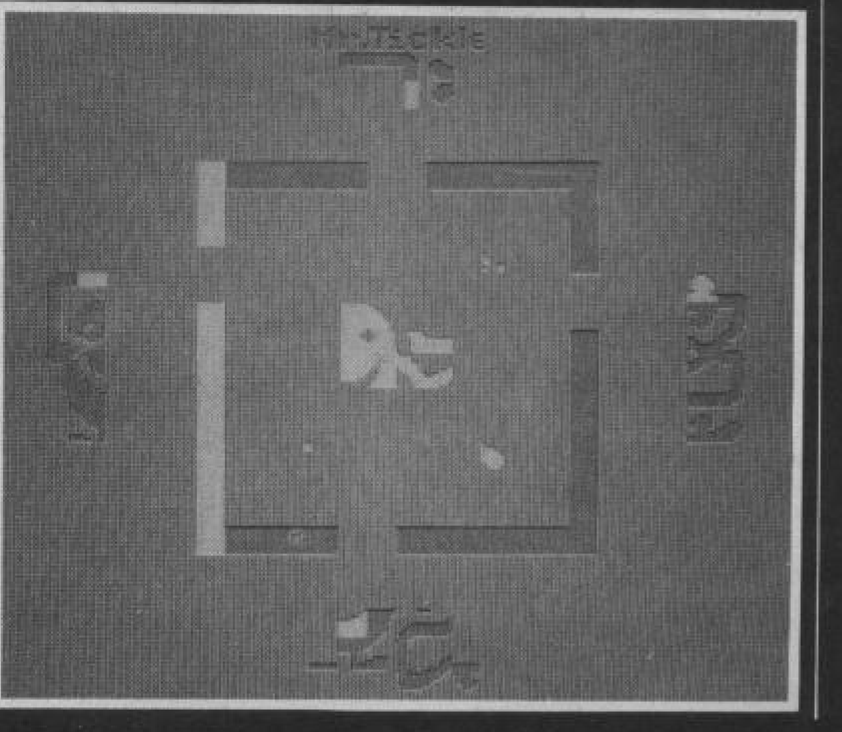
Bearing in mind that the child is the consumer when it comes to educational software, I felt obliged to work with a partner — and engaged the services of Daniel Fenn (aged 4) to help me with the following reviews

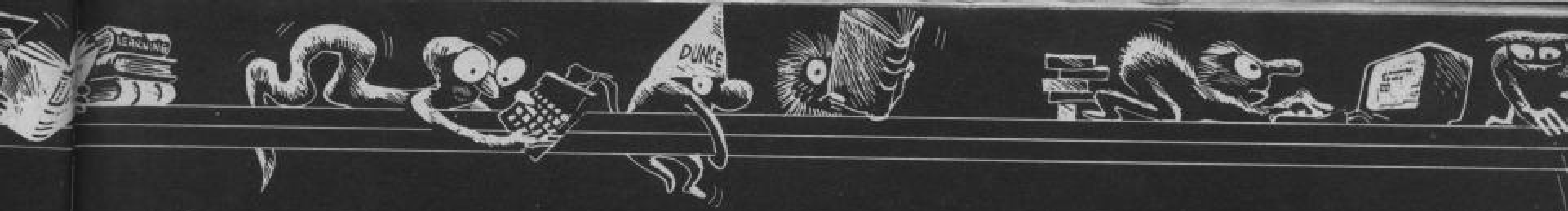
## HERE AND THERE WITH THE MR MEN

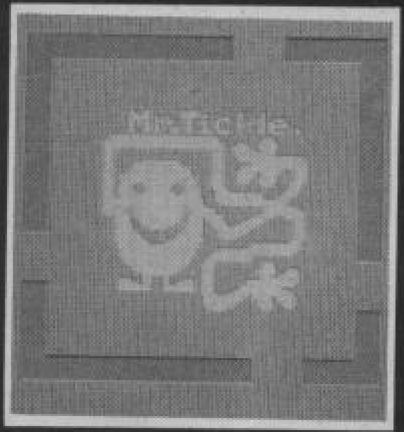
Producer: **Mirrorsoft**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Age group: **4–8yrs**

The games in this package are based on the popular Roger Hargreaves 'Mr Men' characters, which are very appealing to young children and are ideal for use in conjunction with the many books available in the series. The educational aim of this program, as stated in the 'Notes for Parents' is: "... to lead children in an amusing and stimulating way from 'Go that way' (pointing), to 'Move to your right' (my left). . . ." There are four different games in the package. In the first one, 'Mr Tickle's Jigsaw Puzzle', the player has to complete a simple jigsaw using the arrow keys; the other games are of increasing levels of difficulty, and build up to the point where the child has to be able to distinguish between left and right.

The games make a worthy








attempt at teaching the concepts of up, down, right and left, and are certainly an enjoyable way of teaching and reinforcing them. Although they are aimed at children from 4 years upwards, younger children would also enjoy working on them with the help of a parent. It is doubtful, however, whether children of 7 or 8 would be very receptive to the games, as some of them are not particularly difficult. Daniel, (my Chief Tester) particularly enjoyed the 'Mr Tickle and Mr Grumpy' game in which the player can make the task as difficult (interesting) as he wishes by inputting commands which determines the complexity and length of the route taken by Mr Tickle. Daniel, however, who is a bright child, found the other games rather too easy.

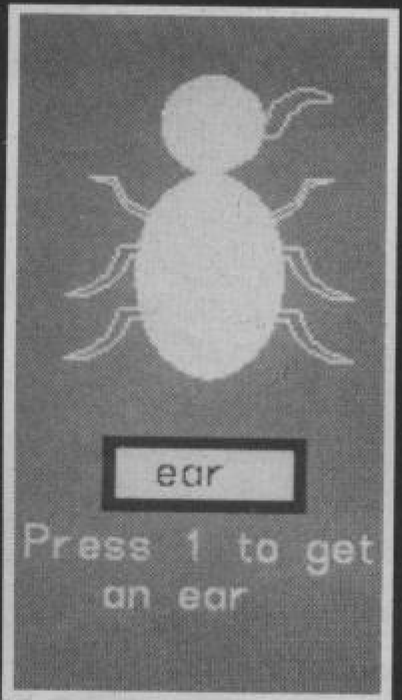
## COMMENTS

**Control keys:** moves from arrow keys to L, R, U, D. ENTER and DELETE are also used.
**Keyboard play**: very good
**Use of colour**: very bright and clear
**Graphics**: very good. The Mr Men characters translate well into into computer graphics.
**General rating:** a good, well-designed game, which would be useful in nursery/primary schools as well as in the home. The games have a minimal storyline, and I would like to see more computer games actually based on Mr Men stories, where the reading of the story would be a requirement for the playing of the game.

# BODYSWOP

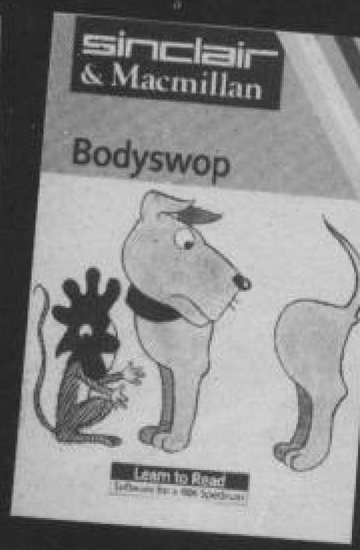
Producer: **Sinclair**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail Price: **£7.95**
Author: **MacMillan Education**
Age Group: **5–8 years**

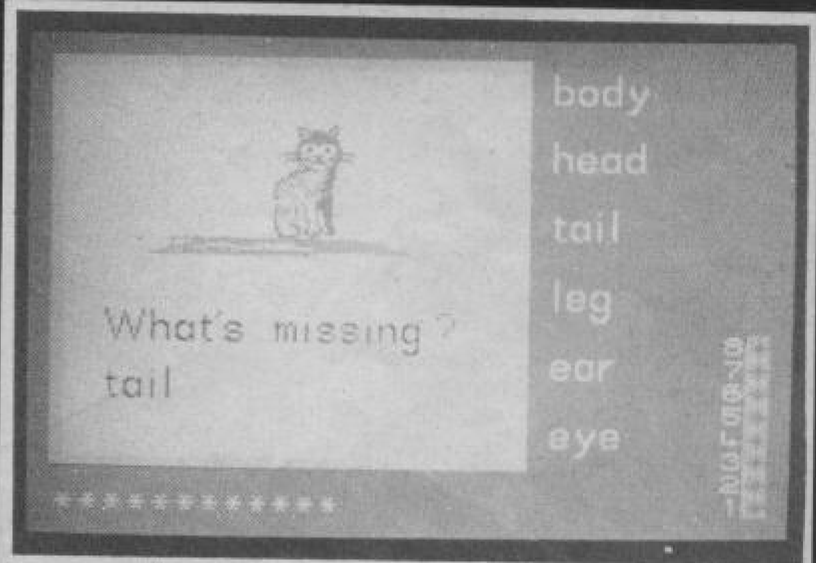
This is a Learn to Read program prepared with the help of two specialists from the Centre for the Teaching of Reading, University of Reading. The booklet reflects this educational expertise, beginning with advice to the parents who may be dubious about the role — if any — that they should play in teaching their pre-school-aged child to read. Thankfully, the point is emphasised that the many children who show no desire to read at all before starting school should not be pressurised or co-erced in any way — and reminds parents that gentle encouragement can spark off real enthusiasm. Parents themselves are encouraged to use the program to give their children the concentrated practice they need to reinforce the new skills being acquired,

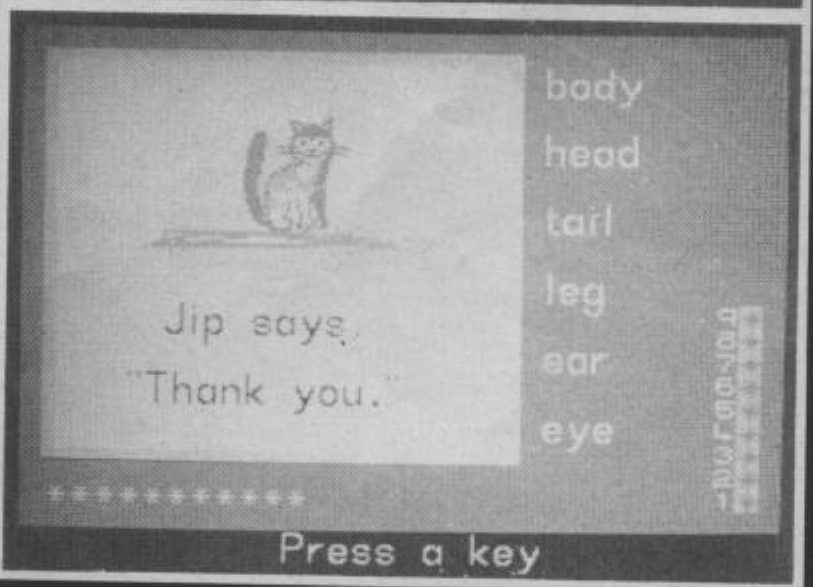



and to follow up the playing of the game by directing the children towards writing activities. All this and other sensible advice to parents is highly useful, for many parents are unsure exactly how to help and encourage their children before they start at school.

The *Bodyswop* program is made up of three main parts: 'look', 'spell' and 'boggle'. 'Look' demonstrates certain parts of the body — trunk, head, tail, leg ear, eye — and the player is given practice in word recognition, being required to press the appropriate key when a word is highlighted. In 'spell' the player must identify the part missing from the animal's body, and features a HELP option. If HELP has been selected, the choice of words is displayed on the screen, so that the child playing the




game can see the correct spelling; without HELP, the words must be remembered. 'Boggle', which is similar to the traditional 'Beetle' game is probably the most enjoyable of the three games. The player has to create a 'boggle' — an animal with a head, six legs, a tail, two eyes and two ears. Additionally, it has a one or two player option.

Daniel found *Bodyswop* slightly boring, and even the 'boggle' option didn't hold his attention for very long. The fact that some of the differences in 'spell' were not always easy to spot also tended to present problems.

## COMMENTS

**Control keys:** mainly 'Press a key'
**Keyboard play:** very responsive
**Use of colours**: bright and clear
**Graphics**: the animals are not particularly well represented
**General rating**: the 'Notes for Parents' in the package are very helpful indeed, and the program is probably as suitable for younger children as it is for the suggested age range.

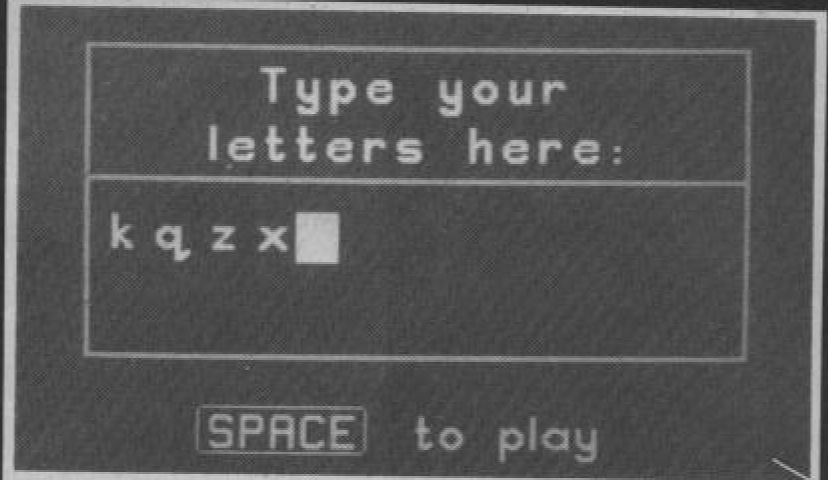
# MR T'S ALPHABET GAMES

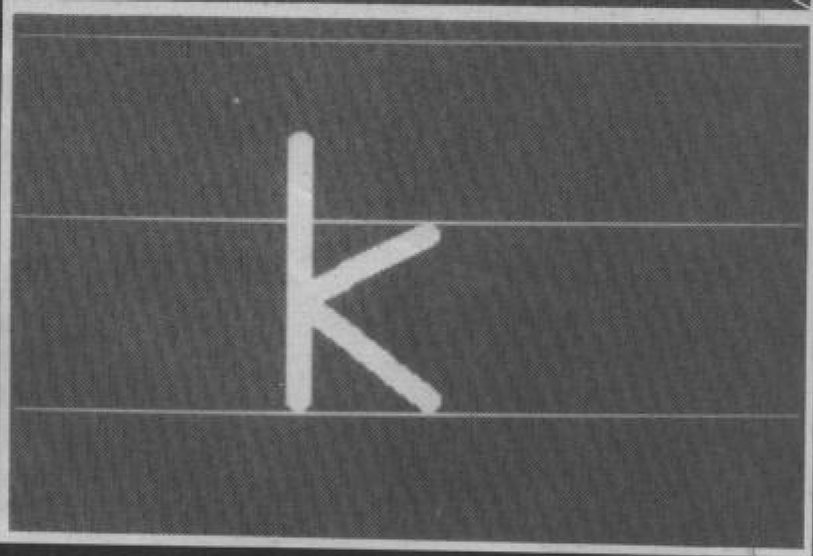



Producer: **Ebury Software/Good Housekeeping**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Author: **Five Ways**
Age group: **3 - 6 Years**

This package, designed by teachers, is intended to complement the pre-reading work that a child will meet at school 'Let's Draw Letters' introduces the child to letter names and shows how the letters of the alphabet (all lower case) are drawn. the letters are introduced in groups according to the order in which they are normally taught in schools eg **c o a d g q** are all based on the rounded **c** or **o** shape. After the child has watched the shape being drawn on the screen and had the chance to discuss it with the parent, the latter is encouraged to let the child practise drawing the letter himself with a large crayon and a piece of paper. This program has the excellent facility of allowing the adult to return to the menu screen at any point to select individual letters for practice. There is also the option of 'drawing' letters on a screen with or without lines for guidance as the child's dexterity improves. *Mr T's Letter Factory* can be introduced to the child by the parent, but then can be played be even the very young child on his own. At the start of the game, Mr T is seen in his factory making letters. The player has to help him by activating a robot arm each time one of the letters coming down the assembly line matches the target letter displayed on the right of the screen. When all the letters in the set are successfully matched, Mr T's van drives away.

This is a very well thought-out game, which allows the supervising parent to select the letters to be used and the level of difficulty. This latter facility is particularly useful if the program is to be used by a number of children with differing abilities.





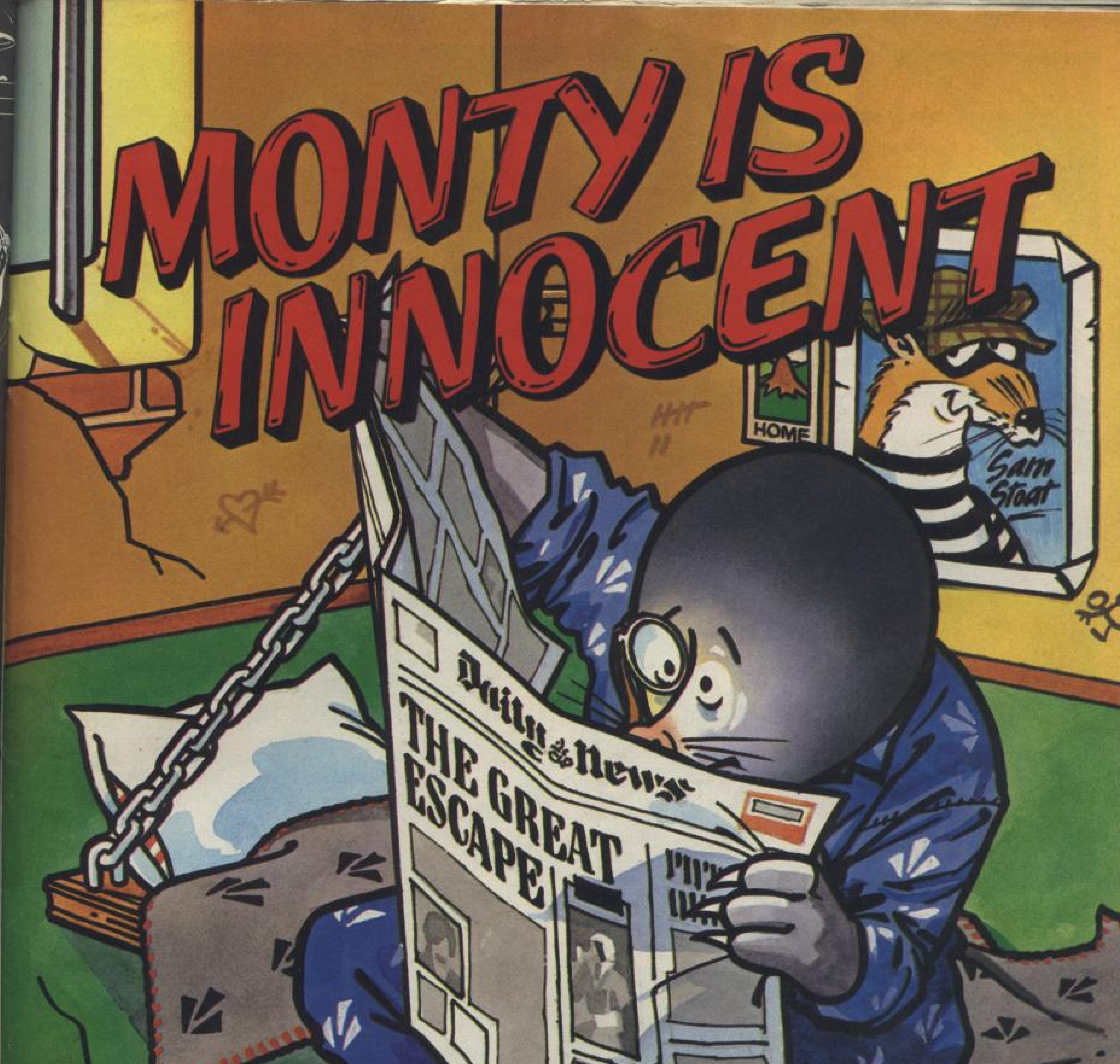


Daniel loved this package. A young child finds drawing letters a fun task when he can copy what the computer is doing, and the 'Letter Factory' game is so visually attractive, that it is bound to appeal to the very young.

## COMMENTS

**Control keys**: The space bar alone is the child's key
**Keyboard play**: very good
**Use of Colours**: excellent
**Graphics**: excellent contrast
**General rating**: an excellent package which has been very carefully structured and is clearly explained.

**Rosetta McLeod is the Principal of the English Department at Linksfield Academy, Aberdeen.**




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## Gremlin Graphics Competition

# Results of the Beaver Bob Competition




The winning entry from PJ Seymour, which appealed the most to GREMLIN GRAPHICS. Here the drawing and character of Beaver Bob is very neatly executed and accentuated by the bright colours.

**In our November issue of CRASH we ran a competition in association with GREMLIN GRAPHICS to design the loading screen for a game which would introduce a new arcade hero called BEAVER BOB. We were quite taken aback by the high number of entries and the often excellent standard achieved.**

The entries recived were short-listed by members of the CRASH team and the selected tapes were sent on to GREMLIN GRAPHICS for their final assessment. While the final decisions were being taken, the game *Beaver Bob in Dam Trouble* was already being written and should be on sale by the time you read this.

The prizes being offered were a new GREMLIN GRAPHICS game for 15 runners-up, a new game and £25 for second and third place, and a first prize of £100 plus fame in the form of a photograph of the winning entrant on the inlay card of *Beaver Bob in Dam Trouble*. So, without further ado, onto the results!

**THE RUNNERS-UP**

Stephen Jarrard, Saffron Walden, Essex
Mike Burley, West Didsbury, Manchester
Stephen A Graham, Bellevue, Carlisle, Cumbria
Steven & David Westland, West Wickham, Kent
Stuart Spalding, Roxburgh, Scotland
J Gray, Rossington, Doncaster
C Fortin & C Leem, Brighton, Sussex
Stephen Sloan, Meadows, Nottingham
I S Russell, Offenham, Nr Evesham, Worcs
Neil Watson, Higher Denham, Uxbridge, Middx
R Jellicoe & M Franklin, Maidstone, Kent
P H Stavers, Sunderland, Tyne & Wear
Andrew Brittain, Herne Hill, London
Geoffrey Paine, Baldock, Herts
Martin Breslin, Greenock, Renfrewshire

**WINNING RUNNERS-UP**

**3rd Place:** Dave Trowsdale, Leicester
**2nd Place:** Graham Lucas, (address parted company with entry)

**THE WINNER**

P J Seymour, Balderton, Newark, Notts

Congratulations go to P J Seymour for his version of the Beaver Bob loading screen, which GREMLIN GRAPHICS will be using on their new game *Beaver Bob in Dam Trouble* — look out for it!

## Competition



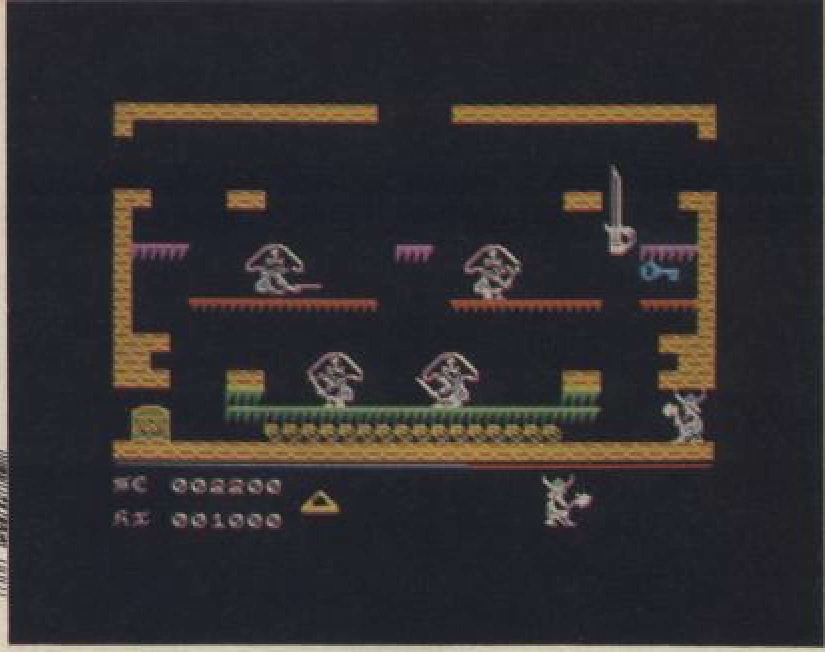

Graham Lucas (2nd place) sent in this nicely drawn and well caricatured version of Beaver Bob, wielding his power chain saw — a popular theme in many of the entries.

Dave Trowsdale submitted this very busy screen, enlarging on the theme of woodcutting. The drawing of Beaver Bob was thought to be very lively and characterful.



# BRIAN BLOODAXE



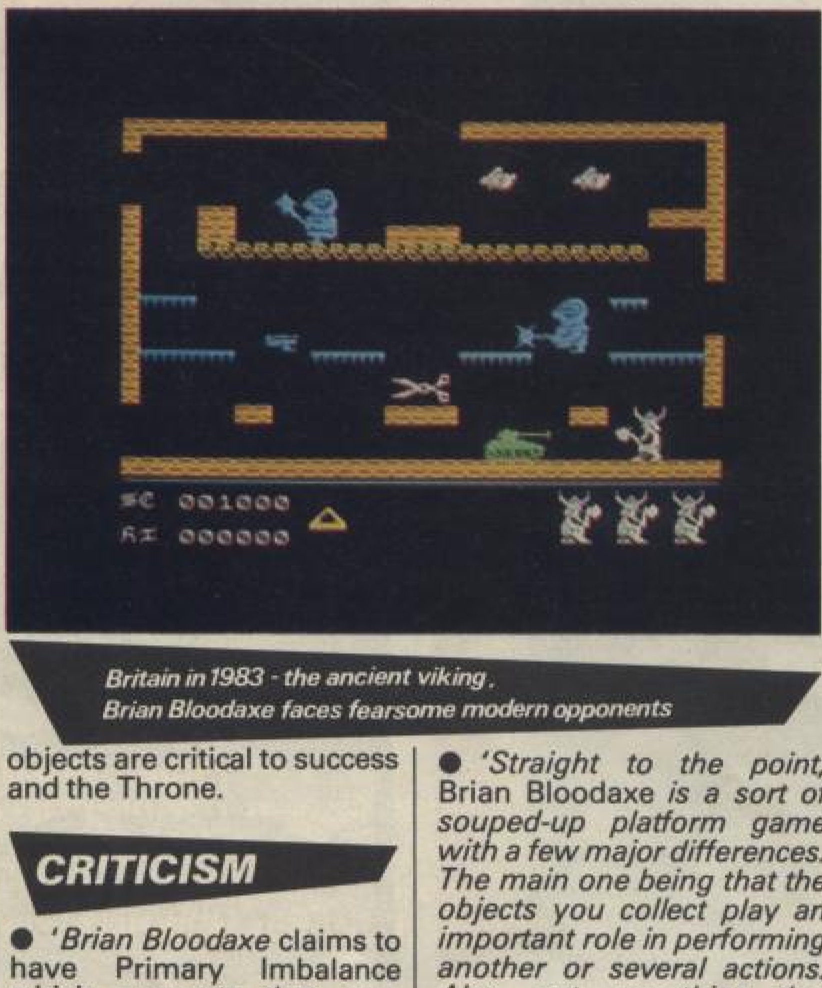


Producer: **The Edge**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Charles Bystram**

With overtones of Monty Python (*Life of Brian*?) in the wrathful hand of God striking death by lightning to the careless games player, *Brian Bloodaxe* sets out on a quest full of Primary Imbalance. The Edge have abandoned 'Synurgy', what ever that was, for a more imbalanced start. Don't worry when after the animated title screen has finished doing its thing, the program crashes. Observant computer owners will notice that the Sinclair logo has become a bit moth-eaten and realise that everything is okay-yah. Soon the familiar Monty Python theme music comes up and you're away.

Away to where, you may wonder. Well the inlay doesn't help much — on purpose, as it states clearly enough. But Brian Bloodaxe is a Viking Rip Van Winkle who has woken up after being stuck in an ice block for hundreds of years. On reawakening he decides to do what he original set out to do, and conquer Britain, except now it's 1983 (a period piece as you see). Through 104 screens of platform-inspired jumping, Brian must steal the Crown Jewels and sit on the throne. The screens are variously designed, one of the early ones is a snooker table complete with killer balls for instance, and require jumping skills. Some objects can be picked up and used like the triangle on the same screen, which keeps the snooker balls away, but it can also be placed usefully and acts as a jumping platform. The larger of the hazards can be used similarly, like the duck whose back is broad and safe as long as you walk fast enough to keep up, but watch the beak!

Primary Imblance seems to be a highly sophisticated programming method whereby things don't always work as you might expect. Water drowns, for instance, but Brian has a fine line in walking on water as long as he keeps bouncing. On the other hand, Primary Imbalance may be nothing more sophisticated than a game frustration factor depending on how you look at it. The ability to pick up objects and use them (Brian can only carry three at a time) does make *Brian Bloodaxe* into more than just a platform game, as the uses of the objects are critical to success and the Throne.



*Britain in 1983 - the ancient viking, Brian Bloodaxe faces fearsome modern opponents*

## CRITICISM

● '*Brian Bloodaxe* claims to have Primary Imbalance which suggests that anything could happen, and this is certainly the case. The Monty Python music also indicates that this is no ordinary game. *BB* is one of the arcade/adventure type games which these days seem to be *the* games and require thought as well as the customary skills. It has all sorts of happenings in it. To name a few, I found I could walk on the back of nasties but dies if I met their path — quite logical — but when jumping off a ledge onto another it decided to move away, leading Brian to a watery grave — quite illogical. So my advice is to expect anything. The idea of collecting objects to use as help as seen in *Knight Lore* is seen here too. *Bloodaxe* is an excellent game which is representative of the high class software which is being produced today.'

● *'Straight to the point,* Brian Bloodaxe *is a sort of souped-up platform game with a few major differences. The main one being that the objects you collect play an important role in performing another or several actions. Also, not everything that moves is deadly — did you know that sharks are safer from behind than in head on? The graphics are excellent and the sound is fab with a rare but appreciated continuous tune that doesn't appear to affect the movement of the graphics at all. The game is certainly fun to play though I think the platform idea has been a bit overworked and should be given a rest. But with that said* Brian Bloodaxe *is still a truly marvellous think, and a game which I don't think The Edge could improve upon. I think Primary Imbalance refers to the hyperload — I had enough problems with that — or maybe the game is played better when you balance upside down on one finger!'*

● 'I think I've discovered what Primary Imblance is. It is that it takes so many attempts to load it and then you try the other side just for luck and it loads straight away! I think this has to be one of the most infuriating games I have ever played. It has good graphics and sound, everything is well drawn and moves well (apart from the Rhinos) and the only thing lacking is the instructions! There are some but they are not intended to help at all so bird-brains have to work it all out for themselves.'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys:** CAPS/Z left/right, C to jump, V/SPACE pick up/drop, X to use an object
**Joystick:** Kempston, Protek, AGF (auto detection), Sinclair 2
**Keyboard play:** responsive and simple to use
**Use of colour:** good, varied
**Graphics:** very good, large, well detailed and smooth
**Sound:** excellent continuous tune
**Skill levels:** 1
**Lives:** 3
**Screens:** 104
**General rating:** very good to excellent, a tough thinking/skill game.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | **85%** |
| **Graphics** | **86%** |
| **Playability** | **89%** |
| **Getting started** | **78%** |
| **Addictive qualities** | **89%** |
| **Value for money** | **86%** |
| **Overall** | **86%** |

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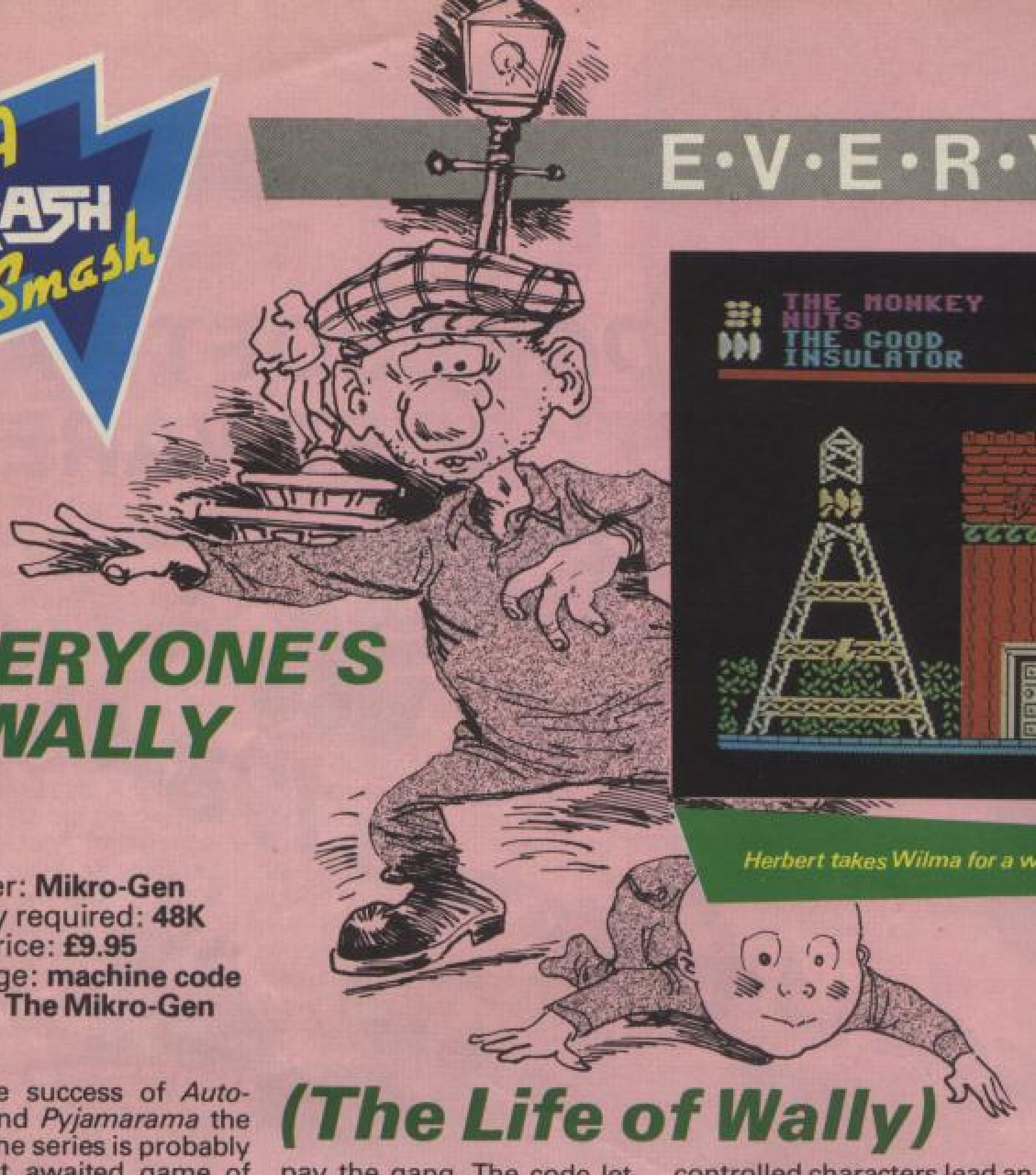
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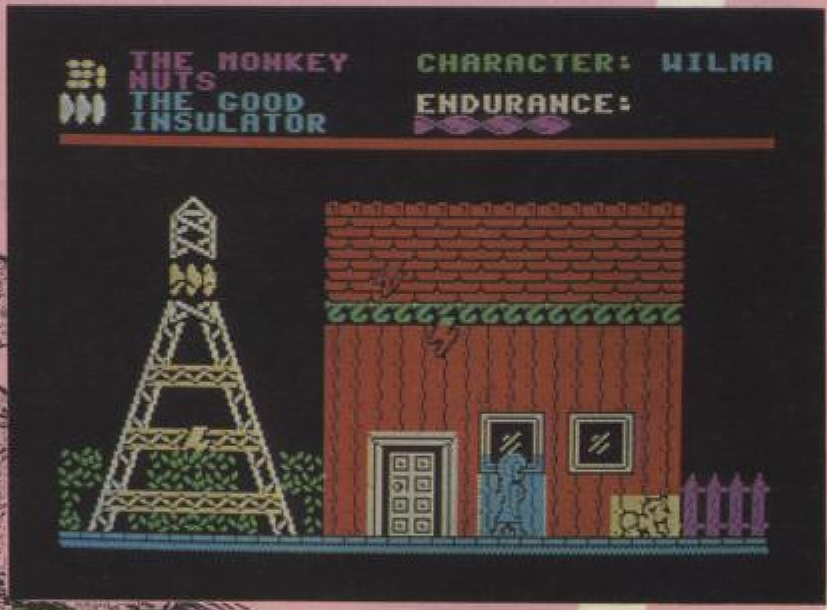
Atlantis Software Ltd, 19 Prebend Street, London N1 8PF. Tel: 01-226 6703

A CRASH Smash



# EVERYONE'S A WALLY

## (The Life of Wally)




Herbert takes Wilma for a walk

Producer: **Mikro-Gen**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **The Mikro-Gen team**

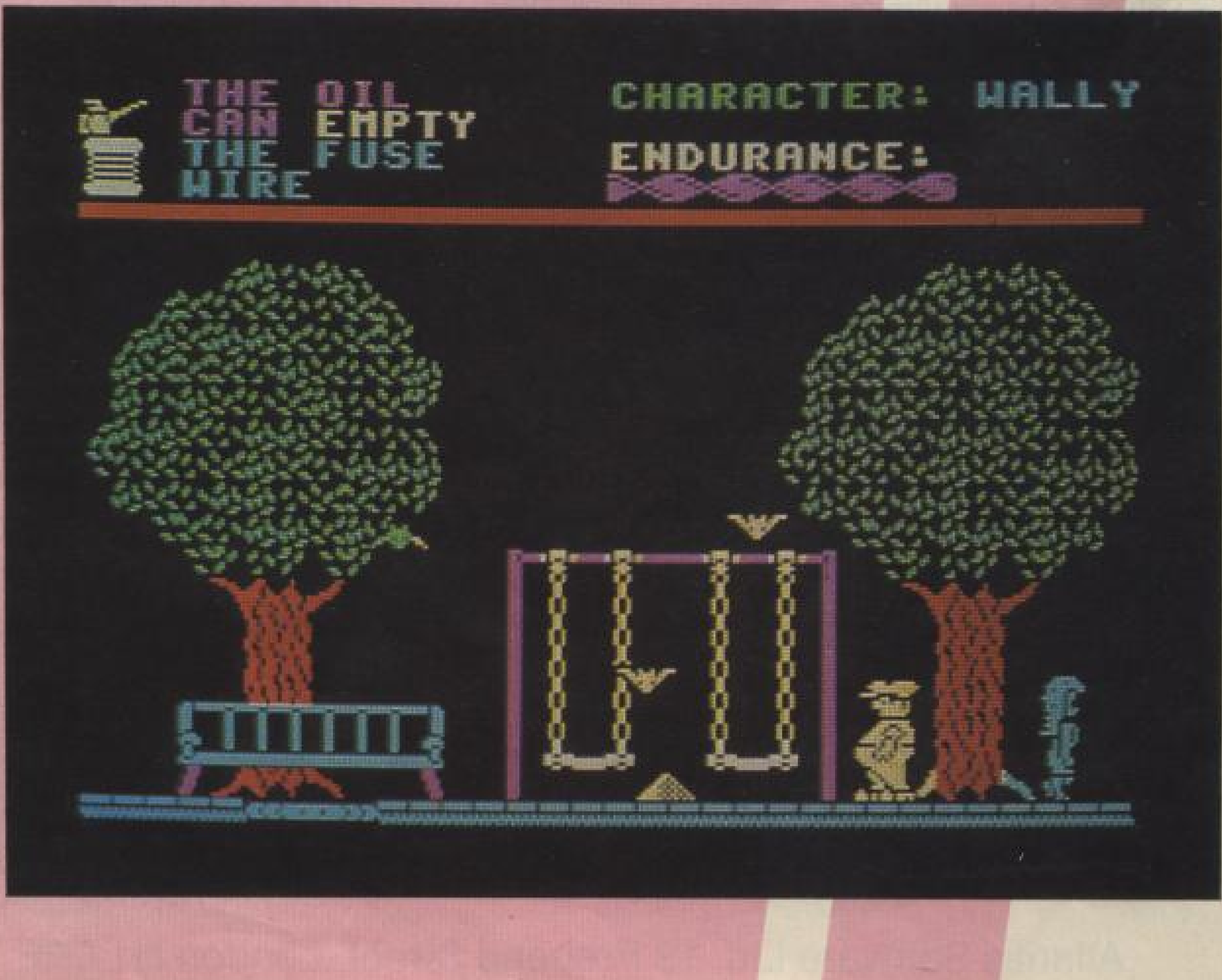
After the success of *Automania* and *Pyjamarama* the third in the series is probably the most awaited game of the moment with the possible exception of *Alien 8*. Follow-ups are a dangerous route to take because comparisons are inevitable. Mikro-Gen seem only too aware of this and have taken pains to see that each one is better than the last. in *Everyone's a Wally* this is certainly true, but they have also expanded the game play and introduced new characters so that Wally's gang are themselves becoming possible future programs. The most notable introductions are Mrs. Week and Master Week. The missus is Wilma, a real dolly-sprite, and the youngster is Herbert, a menace on hands and knees who appears to have the freedom of Walliesville. The rest of the gang are Tom, Dick and Harry.

With the exception of Herbert (who is completely out of hand) the gang are all player-controllable, one at a time. Each of them is capable of undertaking different tasks, Dick, for instance, is the plumber. The gang has a list of tasks, most of which must be preformed by the right person and with the right tools, often jobs depend on other tasks having been completed first. The overall object of the game is to collect all the code letters required to crack the bank safe to steal the money to pay the gang. The code letters act as objects to be collected and they must be taken to the bank in the correct sequence which you have to establish.

As in *Pyjamarama* objects are scattered everywhere and are collected by walking over them which results in the carried object being deposited. Since all five player-controlled characters lead an independent life when not under control, this can become infuriating when someone wanders in and picks up an object you were just about to collect. Exchange of control is done when an uncontrolled character enters the same screen as your controlled character. You then just press the appropriate numerical key and control is exchanged. At any time, by pressing the key for the character you want to know about, a message comes up at the top which tells you where they are.

Like everyone else, the gang need feeding. Wilma's quite good at shopping, which is just as well because although wally will eat anything, the others are much fussier. As a consequence of all the variously inter-related

Swings and Roundabouts for Wally and Wilma



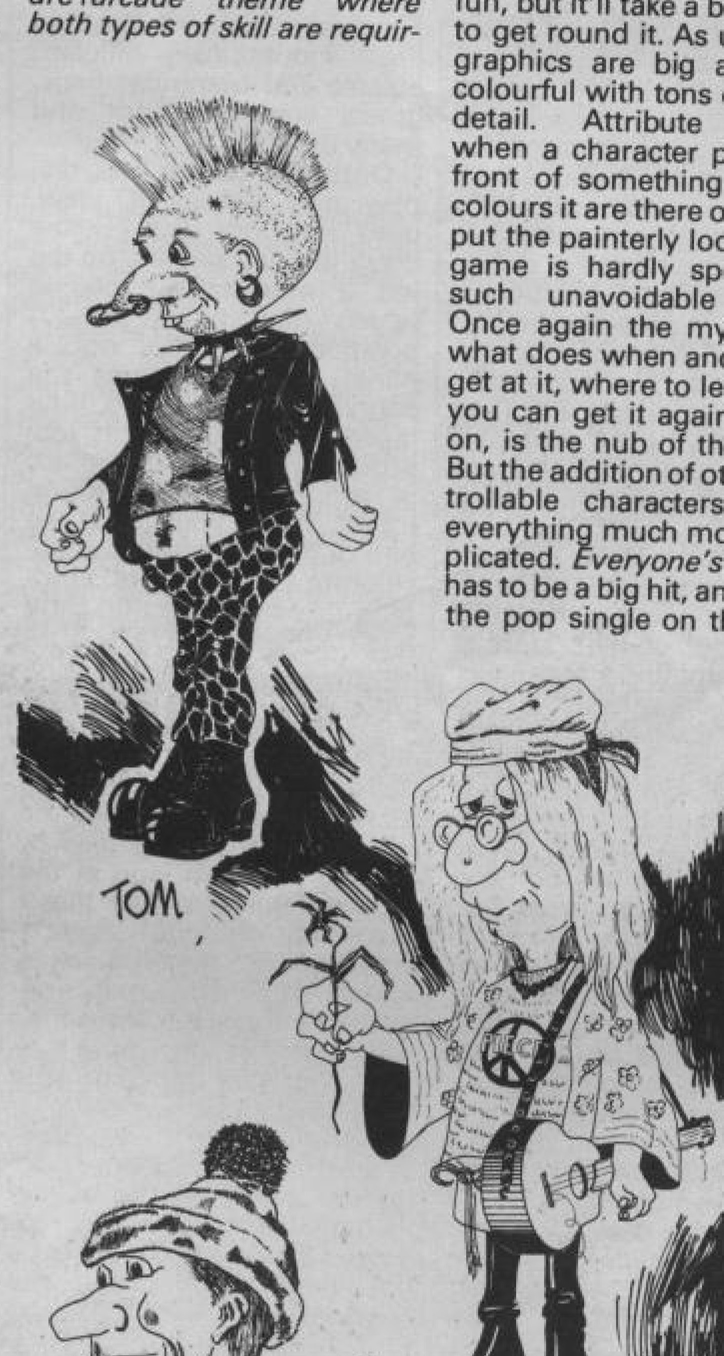
actions, characters and situations, *Everyone's A Wally* is actually a series of separate arcade/adventures within an overall arcade/adventure; and of course there are always the hazards lying around which are detrimental to energy. *Pyjamarama* had a Space Invaders game in the Video Room, *Everyone's a Wally* has two little arcade games tucked into its innards — try a phone call, or cross town underneath the streets!

Another big difference between this and the other programs is that Mikro-Gen have included a free hit single on the reverse of the tape, recorded by Mike Berry and called — guess what?

## CRITICISM

● 'Okay Wally, you've had it easy so far, so let's try and give you something a BIT harder to do. Just raid the bank to pay for the gangs' wages. Easy, right? Well there are a couple of tasks to perform like repairing the fountain and the gas main, and some of those vehicles you'll need are broken. BUT being a Wally you can't possibly do all this by yourself, so there are a few friends around to help out. As usual you've been placed in BRILLIANT graphics and there's a great tune — a Wally tune of course — before you start on your Wallyventure. Being a Wally, everything is so difficult it may take you some time just to familiarise yourself with your Wally surroundings. Well Wally, what are you waiting for? You've been set in the perfect game so make the most of your brill graphics, sound and friends and get cracking on your megadventure.'

● *'Continuing with the trilogy of Wally, the theme has been taken one step further; more characters have been introduced to the game and these add a new dimension to the playing techniques. The idea of expanding one character to five must be a major advance in the game idea. Each character, having its own task to complete, does make the game somewhat more difficult and adds more depth. The graphics are along the now traditional Wally line but there are more of them and they are more detailed; each of the main characters is very clear and distinctly personal. The only problem in this area is the usual attribute problem when more than two colours are used, but this is not too disturbing, and after a while you hardly notice it in any case. Animation is superb, and I especially liked baby Wally, who crawled very well. The Wally trilogy is going more into the advent-ure†arcade theme where both types of skill are required. All in all even a better game than* Pyjamarama *was. Another winner by Mikro--Gen.'*




● 'Success seems to be going to Wally's stomach — he's putting on a touch of weight! Mind you, when you see the butcher's and the baker's you can see why. A map of the town in which the action takes place should be fun, but it'll take a bit of time to get round it. As usual the graphics are big and very colourful with tons of drawn detail. Attribute flashes when a character passes in front of something and recolours it are there of course, put the painterly look of this game is hardly spoiled by such unavoidable things. Once again the mystery of what does when and how to get at it, where to leave it so you can get it again and so on, is the nub of the game. But the addition of other controllable characters makes everything much more complicated. *Everyone's a Wally* has to be a big hit, and I hope the pop single on the other side of the cassette does as well (although our preview copies did not have this on yet). Excellent value and great fun.'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys:** Q,E,T,U,O/W, R,Y,I,P left/right, 3rd row for exit screen (through doors, streets etc), 4th row to jump, 1-5 select character keys
**Joystick:** Kempston, Sinclair 2
**Keyboard play:** highly responsive
**Use of colour:** excellent
**Graphics:** excellent
**Sound:** very good
**Skill levels:** 1
**Lives:** endurance
**Screens:** lots (to be advised by readers)!
**General rating:** excellent.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 90% |
| **Graphics** | 93% |
| **Playability** | 94% |
| **Getting started** | 89% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 96% |
| **Value for money** | 96% |
| **Overall** | **93%** |

Reviews

# SKI STAR 2000

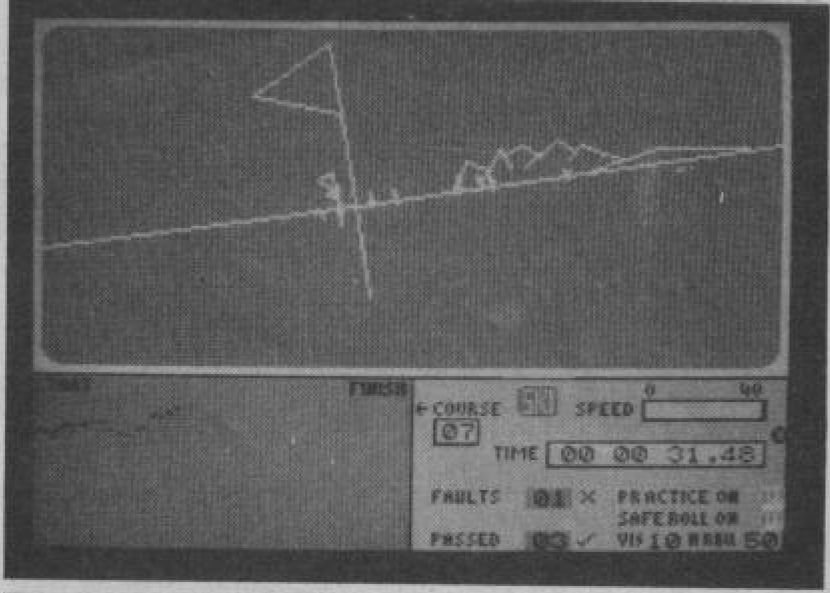
Producer: **Richard Shepherd**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Pete Cooke**

As a software house Richard Shepherd is probably best known for adventure games like *Urban Upstart*.*Ski Star 2000* is NOT an adventure, in fact it is really something quite different and, as the company is at pains to point out, this new game should not be confused with the downward scrolling ski games that have been popular. In fact *Ski Star* could best be decribed at a 'Piste Pole Position', for it is a downhill 3D, eye-level view skiing simulation. The program includes 16 different downhill course, 14 of which may be redesigned infinitely through a complex but fascinating Course Designer. Other variables can be designed in via the Course Variables Editor. The fixed modes which can be selected here enable players to compete and directly compare scores using exactly the same conditions without laborious note comparisons.

*Ski Star* comes with lengthy instructions, but much of these are to do with using the options, and it is here that the great strength of this program appears. After loading you are presented with an icon menu of options:

**Play Game**
**Choose Course**
**Design Course**
**Best Times**
**Define keys**

If you select Choose a Course, you see a list of headings, level choices and values. A white bar selects by using the keys or joystick. Having entered all the selections you want, you can use MODE, which will give this combination a mode number so that you can reset the same values without entering each one individually. There are 32 modes in all of which 0 to 3 are fixed so that competitions across the country can be held under fixed and fair conditions for comparison of times. The other Modes can be customised. Here you can alter height of view from zero feet to a bird's eye 20 feet (said to be useful for assessing a course); you can control rate of turn, the angle you lean at in turns, how fast you accelerate and deccelerate, whether the map plot showing current map position is on or off, quality of visibility, redefine the paper, ink and border colours, select whether it snows or not and how hard, and you can even define the shape of your goggles (ie the screen playing shape).



*A playing screen, as you hurtle towards a marker flag. Current position on the course is plotted at the bottom left.*

The Course Designer uses icons, rather like the Macintosh computer. On the left is the pre-set course, start at the bottom, finish at the top. Symbols represent the various components. On the right is a symbol editor which includes a dustbin and a door. Using the keys or joystick you take the on-screen cursor to the symbol you want to pick up, press fire, and then move the picked-up symbol the the spot on the course you want. Pressing fire again places it. Symbols may therefore be added to the course, removed from it or moved about on the course. Any symbol not wanted is taken to the dustbin and removed, and when the course is designed to the player's satisfaction, the cursor is taken to the door to exit from the editor mode.

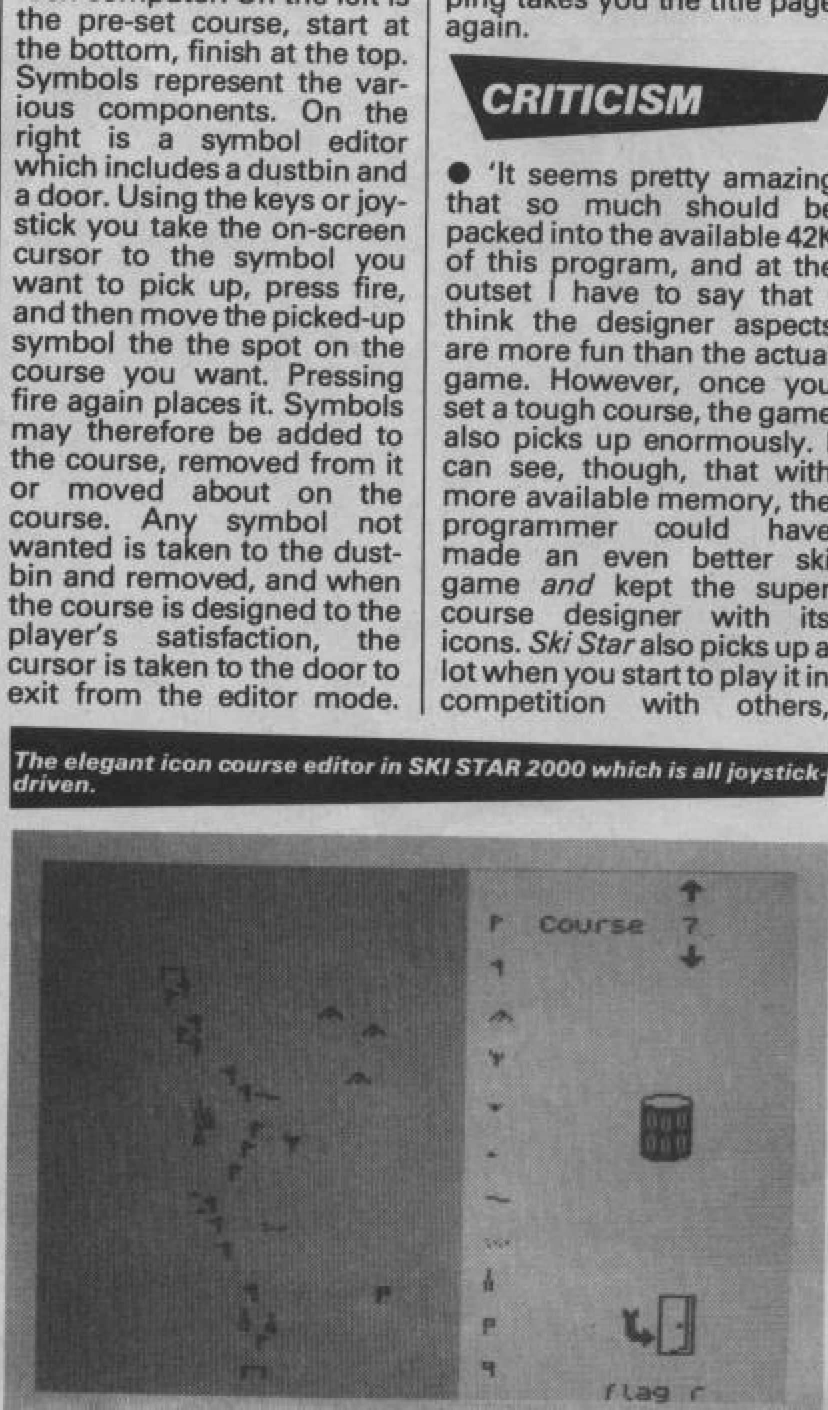
Features which are included are mountains, hillocks, square and triangular flags, grass, crevasses, grit and many others.

Onto the game. The display area with its 3D view, uses line graphics. Below there are two panels, on the left a map of the course which plots your present position; and on the right a panel which indicates the course number, speed, time taken, number of faults recorded, and whether you are in practice or competition mode. When you get to the end of the run, you must decelerate to a stop, and stopping takes you the title page again.

## CRITICISM

● 'It seems pretty amazing that so much should be packed into the available 42K of this program, and at the outset I have to say that I think the designer aspects are more fun than the actual game. However, once you set a tough course, the game also picks up enormously. I can see, though, that with more available memory, the programmer could have made an even better ski game *and* kept the super course designer with its icons. *Ski Star* also picks up a lot when you start to play it in competition with others, rather like *Chequered Flag*, because it is here that the competitive spirit brings the simulation aspects to life. Diving in and out of the flags and avoiding the various hazards is not that easy on a more difficult course, which gives the game addictiveness, but the fact that you can keep on re-designing courses adds even more lasting appeal to this very unusual program.'

*The elegant icon course editor in SKI STAR 2000 which is all joystick-driven.*




● *'There's been no real attempt on a ski game for the Spectrum (unless you except* Horace Goes Skiing*). Ski Star* 2000 *is quite a brave attempt to reproduce an accurate simulation of skiing down a slope. The graphics are line drawn, probably just to add speed to the game, and once you get used to them they are quite acceptable. One of the best things about the game is that you can totally re-design it and tailor it to your own liking. the editors for the course and the variable are brilliant and very professional. This is probably the main feature of the game. A good bash at a difficult subject.'*

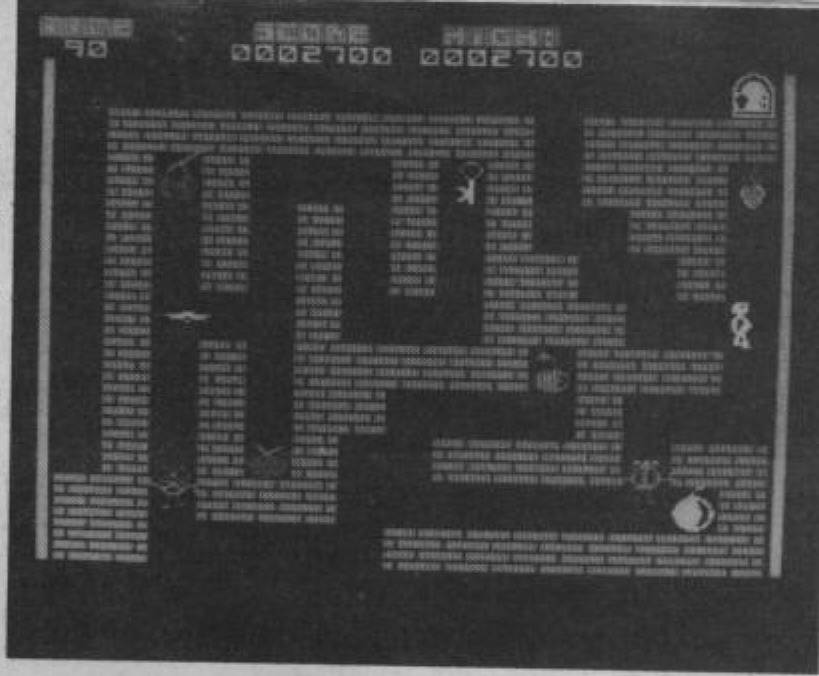
● 'If you like 3D simulation games, then the new *Ski Star 2000* from Richard Shepherd is a must. It offers the player all the fun of competing against himself or others, even by post or in magazine hi-score pages. I was left wondering how fabulous it would be if the graphics could have been solid 3D instead of wire frame, but that's asking too much of the Spectrum. *Ski Star* should open up the market to this type of game, and hopefully we will then see even greater improvements made. As it is, this game is a marvellous idea and fun to play, more fun to play with the editor, and even more fun if you're with friends. I would say, buy it.'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys:** pre-set O/P left/right, A/Z accel/decel, M to fire (editors), but all keys may be user defined
**Joystick:** Kempston, Sinclair 2, Protek, AGF
**Keyboard play:** responsive
**Use of colour:** straightforward as you would expect, but redefinable to some degree
**Graphics:** nicely drawn,

more utilitarian than attractive
**Sound:** not much
**Skill levels:** infinitely variable
**General rating:** an adventurous idea, well executed and with marvellous redefinable characteristics. Should prove addictive to simulation/racer players

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 93% |
| **Graphics** | 65% |
| **Playability** | 69% |
| **Getting started** | 84% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 65% |
| **Value for money** | 73% |
| **Overall** | **75%** |



# FORBIDDEN FRUIT

Producer: **Tansoft**
Memory required: 48K
Retail price: **£5.50**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Thomas Derbyshire**

This is the first game for the Spectrum that Tansoft have produced, having been previously more concerned with the Oric computers. *Forbidden Fruit* is a simple idea in which you guide a character around several screens to collect a key for the screen exit and various flavours of forbidden fruit for bonus points.

The screens consist of simple maze shapes filled with at least three nasties at any one moment, that parade about the playing area in pre-set patterns. At the top of the screen appears a graphic of the fruit you may collect next. On collecting it, the graphic changes to the next available fruit. To prevent you from being killed off, your character has a laser, but this only fires left and right, so timing is required to judge the right moment to use a vertical chanel. As you progress through the screens, the layouts become more tricky and the keys and fruit are placed more awkwardly.

The copy we were given to look at was an early pre-production version, so the packaging with its all-important blurb was missing! Hence we have no vitally interesting storyline to give you about the game which is so often designed to tell you about the packaging but little about the game!

## CRITICISM

● 'There seems to have been a lot of maze games come out just recently; usually what you see on screen is only a tiny portion of the entire maze. *Forbidden Fruits* shows the entire maze, ie each screen is a separate maze of its own and one of many. The graphics are large, very detailed and colourful, each having its own predictable characteristics. Because of the fruit in this game and the meanies chasing you, you could possibly say that this is a considerable departure from the 'Pacman' theme. This game

is simplicity itself but it does pose some problems in getting past the meanies to get out of the maze. I think this is quite good value for money and I was able to play it for hours without tiring of it, although it does depend on whether you like this type of game.'

● *'It's well worth remembering how poor the general standard of graphics used to be in some of the older, simpler maze games, because* Forbidden Fruit has large and very nicely animated creatures in it — the visual factor that distinguishes it as a modern game. First screens are quite easy, but later ones get quite hairy and keep the interest up. Learning the patterns of nasty movement is a large part of the playing skills required, and so something akin to the game element of, say Manic Miner, *is incorporated. I found it addictive and playable, not a major game to make your hair stand on end, but certainly enjoyable and rather more clever than it first appears.'*

● '*Forbidden Fruit* is a novel variant on the maze game, you don't have to collect everything to complete a screen, but you can if you want to score well. The graphics are quite good and detailed with colour being used well. The sound is boring and isn't really worth having at all, what little there is of it. Keyboard play is responsive but the keyboard positions are awkward to use. This is quite playable, and being only able to fire sideways adds a new dimension to the difficulty. It's quite addictive for a while, but you won't be playing it until the early hours of the morning. Overall, quite good but not in the terrific league.'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys:** D/C up/down, O/P left/right, A/S fire left/right, I to fire in movement direction
**Joystick:** Kempston, AGF, Protek, Sinclair 2
**Keyboard play:** responsive, but a rather odd combination and fire is on the wrong side of the left/right keys
**Use of colour:** very good and cheerful
**Graphics:** good, clear and big with characterful animation
**Sound:** below average
**Skill levels:** 1
**Lives:** 3
**Screens:** unknown
**General rating:** above average to good, and selling at a sensible price.

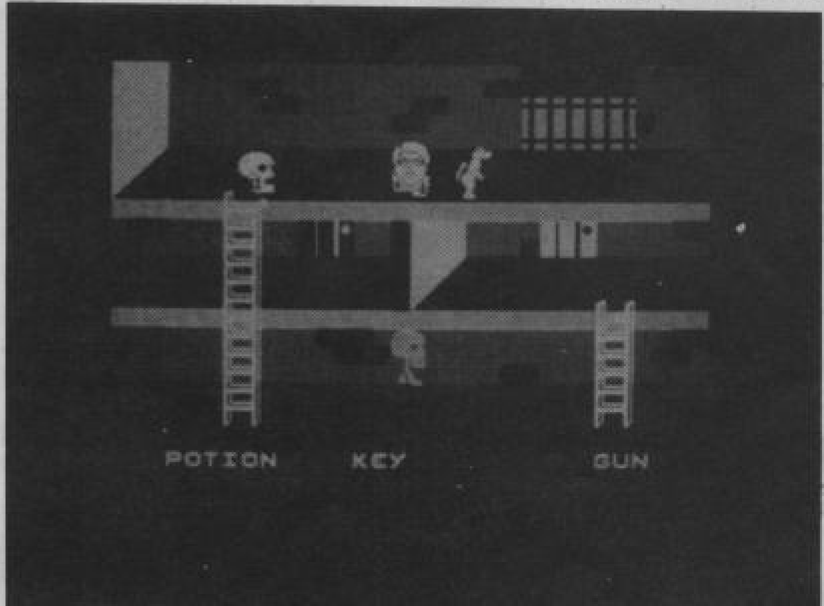
| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 70% |
| **Graphics** | 75% |
| **Playability** | 75% |
| **Getting started** | N/A |
| **Addictive qualities** | 67% |
| **Value for money** | 78% |
| **Overall** | **73%** |

# MONTY IS INNOCENT

Producer: **Gremlin Graphics**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Chris Kerry**

Sequels being all the rage lately, it is important at the outset to say that *Monty is Innocent* is not a sequel to *Wanted: Monty Mole*. The game is entirely different in look and style and features a new hero, Sam Stoat. So what's the connection with poor old Monty? After stealing a bucket of coal and getting caught by Arthur's flying pickets, Monty has been imprisoned for five years in HM Scudmore along with murderers and arsonists. But on the outside, powerful friends are working to free him, among them Monty's best friend Sam Stoat. The object of the game is guide Sam around the halls, corridors, tunnels and exercise yards of Scudmore in search of the Governor's office and the eight keys that will open the eight doors to get to Monty.

*Monty is Innocent* is not a platform-style game like its predecessor, but a linked multi-screen 3D maze type which uses solid, brightly coloured graphics to draw the locations. It isn't proper 3D despite the perspective drawings but relies on the drawn spaces to define near and far away, rather like some of the Thor games. This is not, perhaps, very surprising as Chris Kerry the author is the same Chris Kerry who did *Jack and the Beanstalk* etc. Keys can be picked up from inside the Governor's office safe and used by Sam, and it is one of those games that requires learning the layout to get around quickly, because Sam needs to constantly return to the Governor's office for more keys.




## CRITICISM

● 'After enjoying *Monty Mole* I was rather disappointed with *Potty Pigeon*, but *Monty is Innocent* is great. It's really colourful and although the graphic movement is not ultra-smooth, it's okay. The locations are well laid out and due to the differences of each location, you soon begin to know your way around. Frustrations such as solitary confinement tend to ensure that you only make such mistakes but once! On some occasions I found Sam's movement a little dodgy but this added to the difficulty, so who cares? Perhaps a little of the scenery could have been used as game play memory space, but this may have spoilt the atmosphere, so maybe I should just shut up and give an opinion — very good.'

● 'The differences between this game and their previous ones are that the graphics are much more detailed and and jazzed up. There are quite a few 3D type scenes which work very well, but on the whole they don't add anything to the game. The game itself seemed quite big at first and indeed you can be exploring for quite a while. But it does become apparent that there is no need to wonder around the entire prison complex to be able to release Monty. In fact there are only a handful of screens that you need to play with. There doesn't seem much actual gaming element in *Monty is Innocent*, although you do consistently get killed off. But other than avoiding the inmates of the prison and finding the right key, there isn't a lot else to it — it doesn't, for instance, require the arcade skills that were so essential in the previous Monty game. Nice graphics, shame about the game.'

## COMMENTS

**Control keys:** Q/W left/right, O/K up/down, P to pick up keys
**Joystick:** Kempston, Sinclair 2
**Keyboard play:** slightly odd combination, but it works well and response is good
**Use of colour:** colour plays an important part as it defines the 3D effect — drawback is with the attribute problem at times
**Graphics:** moving characters are neat and detailed with reasonable animation
**Sound:** good tune between games, spot effects
**Skill levels:** 1
**Lives:** 4
**Screens:** 48
**General rating:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Use of computer** | 76% |
| **Graphics** | 86% |
| **Playability** | 76% |
| **Getting started** | 80% |
| **Addictive qualities** | 75% |
| **Value for money** | 74% |
| **Overall** | **78%** |

# THE WINNERS!




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# FRONT



FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT AT THE FRONT
ANGUS RYALL

**When I was younger, working on various college Rag Mags and stuff, I had this peculiar idea that being a megastar journalist would change my life. In fact, all that happened was that I end up sitting up all night for about three days in a row, roughly two weeks after the final copy date has passed, madly trying to get everything together in time. I have a sneaking feeling that all part-time writers work this way; certainly I used to know some people who wrote for the music press, and they claimed that they simply could not write at all until after the copy date. Funnily enough, the soon-to-be-deceased/late lamented *Big K* magazine was staffed by a lot of ex-*NME* people, which tells you quite a lot about why it was like it was, and also why it no longer is. What the intuitive among you will have realised is that I am working my way round to apologising for the apalling errors I have made in recent issues, like abusing the wrong people, getting my opinions wrong, etc. I must say, actually, I had the good fortune to meet John Gilbert last week at the Toy Fair, and I'm sure if it hadn't been for the fact that we were giving away free wine on our stand, he would certainly have explained to me the exact nature of his identity crisis. A splendid chap. The point is, though, that we journalists are under an immense amount of pressure, and can't avoid making the odd slip, and there's really no cause for any offence to be taken. Anyway. . . .**

I'm back again, and just about suitably psyched up to deliver another vituperative harangue. In case you didn't realise I missed last month's copy date yet again (this is getting boring) but it wasn't my fault Your Honour, there were mitigating circumstances! You see, my fiancé and I live in a (how shall we put this?) derelict house, which we actually own (fools!) and intend to renovate, flog and make a hefty profit on. Unfortunately, there are some slight drawbacks to living in this salubrious joint, like the fact that when it snows it actually comes right down the chimney into the living room — and of course going to the loo becomes a major Arctic expedition. Once you've got the huskies hitched up, you have to negotiate a ten-foot high mountain of bricks in the backyard. The loo itself is frozen up, and sitting on it is something else — it leaves your posterior feeling like it's been ravaged by a rampant squid. In an effort to ease the tribulation of living in this hardship station, I have taken to using a potty indoors at night . . . I don't think I can go on with this — it gets really disgusting! As I had ten days off from my day job over Christmas, I thought I would really get stuck in to a number of desperate jobs, like putting some heating and hot water in, and so on. And now, in fact, our standard of living has increased by about 300%. We no longer have to trek over to the other side of town to wash at my mum's, and we've got a nice stereo. The thing is, though, that I just didn't get time to look at any games, let alone write about any. (This is not quite true, I did spend a little time playing *Knight Lore*, and I have to say 'Well done, all you lot at Ashby'). I think I'll just resign now, OK? Also, I will admit to playing *Dark Star* a bit, and I have a great tip for anyone with a joystick: easily the best way to play *Darkstar* is to define all the right-hand keys at accelerate, all the left-hand keys as brake, stick the Speccy on the floor, take your shoes off and use it like the pedals in a car. This enables you to keep both hands on your joystick all the time (after a while I found that I could even hit the '1' button pretty accurately with my toe). The only drawback is that it can get a bit smelly, and your friends tend to regard you as some kind of pervert.

Just before Christmas I had the time of my day at the EMAP Christmas party at the Camden Palace. To those of you who don't know, EMAP is a big publishing company, which owns loads of magazines, such as *C-5 User* and *C&VG*. In view of my oft-expressed pleas for more friendly relations between magazine people, I was not at all surprised to get the call to Camden Town (funny Roger couldn't make it — had a bad attack of the belly ache, I hear) and headed off down the central line confidently expecting the usual gutful of gin. But — horror of horrors! — the free bar closed at nine o'clock, well before I'd hit my stride. In that time, though, I had managed to have a very meaningful 18-second conversation with **Lee Guinty** of **Micro Dealer** (Lee is a person of immense power, because he has a large say in how many games a Software Company is going to sell. He stands me up at lunch dates, but OK, I can take the humiliation)(sob). I'd also had a long chat with **Clive Bailey** of **Beyond** about how brilliantly they've been doing lately and, I can now reveal to you, in a sneak leak, that Beyond will shortly be launching a new label! Like, wow!

You may have noticed from previous reports that I like going to exhibitions and things. Well, I think I've changed my mind. I've just spent the last five days at the Earls Court Toy Fair, an event which must surely rival even the dreadful Ideal Home Exhibition for sheer tedium. Funnily enough, there were virtually no software companies there at all, although there were plenty of people looking for them — perhaps this explains why I was hardly bought any drinks at all during the entire show. Or maybe it was just the fascist car-park attendants, scaring them away. Who can tell? I'd also just like to say hello to the person who congratulated me on my column (wash your brain out with soap, you degenerate) — it almost makes it all worthwhile, although the odd beer would help as well. Incidentally, I had the most apalling experience with microdrives at the show — one day we had a press reception in the morning for all the hacks to see our new games. Guess what happened — all three cartridges with the new games on had mysteriously de-formatted themselves, and so I had absolutely nothing to show the assembled throng. I felt a right dingbat, and the moral is clear — if you have to rely on microdrives, then don't use them at all.

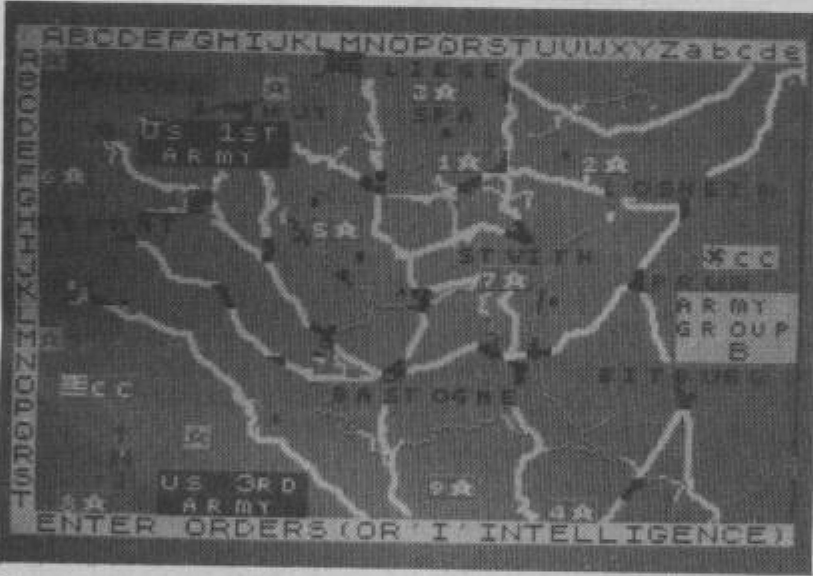
# T LINE



## PANZER ATTACK




Producer: **Lothlorien**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£6.95**
Authors: **R Packer and T Kitchener**



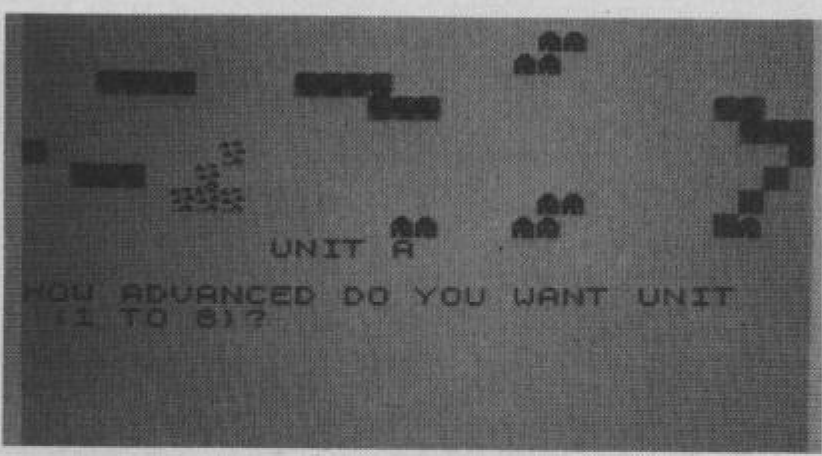

I've not had many kind words to say about Lothlorien in the past, so I would not have minded being able to say something nice about them now. Sadly, I can't. This is a game based on the Battle of the Bulge in 1944 — you have to prevent the Germans from capturing your fuel dumps, and thus moving on to capture Antwerp. The game kicks off with twelve text screens of how to play the game, what really happened, etc. The map that comes up is a 'true' geographical representation of the Ardennes; in the usual wargame fashion it operates not with cursor, but with map references to define objective points. I wish people would stop using these map reference things — they are imprecise, hard on the eyes, and generally make games look old-fashioned and cruddy, like Battleships or something. Having said that, the map in *Panzer Attack* is definitely better than their usual standard: but it's still next to impossible to see what is going on. There are some nice touches in the game, the fact that the intelligence that you receive is not always correct; but there are also some horrible touches, such as the way the reports come up going beep beep bip bip beep like morse code. To sum up, *Panzer Attack* gave me a headache, but then since I've been demonstrating computer games non-stop for a week, it's not at all surprising.

## EAST FRONT




Producer: **CCS**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Authors: **R Neilson**

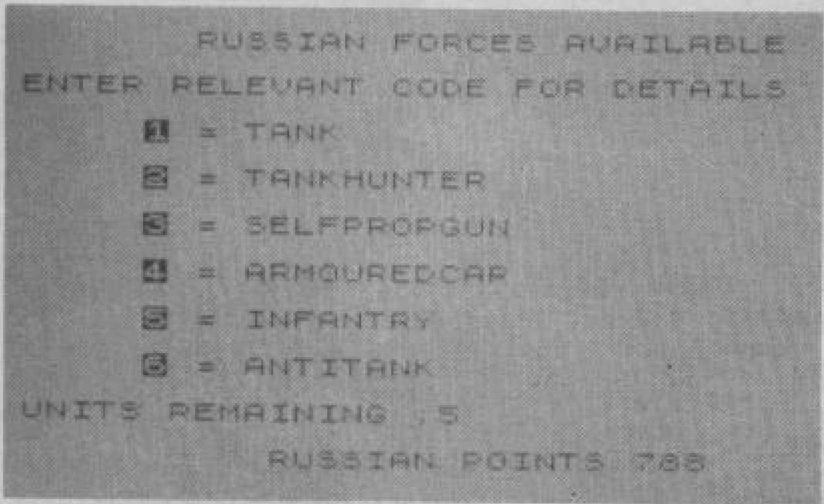
'Oh no!' I thought as I pulled this one out. Not another innocent-looking CCS game with an inlay card that folds out to be about eight feet long. But yes, my predictions proved to be entirely right again. I was interested to see what this would be like because it advertises itself as being the game of 'Tactical Warfare on the Russian Front, 1941–45', and as a general rule, I prefer closer tactical games to expansive strategy ones. However, in this particular case. . . . The program is mostly in BASIC, which is a bad start, and the map generation routine is just risible. the game is supposedly very flexible in terms of the various different terrain and weather conditions you can impose, but one of the problems is that the average Russian landscape consists of a couple of acres of snow, a few pine trees, an empty Vodka bottle and a food queue. Translated onto a computer screen this tends to give a square or two of action in a sea of whiteness. Apparently Cruise missiles have had a number of problems coping with the Russian landscape — all those CIA agents who proudly lost their lives to bring back accurate OS maps of even the most obscure parts of the USSR so that the right information could be fed into the control systems of cruise missiles, would no doubt be overjoyed to learn that when the whole lot gets blanketed in thirty feet of snow, as so




often happens in Russian winters, the things begin to lose their bearings and end up in the middle of Spitsbergen. So, if February is getting you down — rejoice! Think of it as the closed season! Which is totally by-the-by.

The units are represented on screen by letters (ABC order) in boxes, and they flash (wow!) when it's their go. This is a two-player game, which I don't personally mind, but a lot of folks do, and it also requires the players not to watch each other at certain points. I can't really say a lot in *East Front*'s favour, except that the author obviously knows his period, because there are loads of peculiar different units to choose from.

**Saving grace:** no co-ordinate entry!



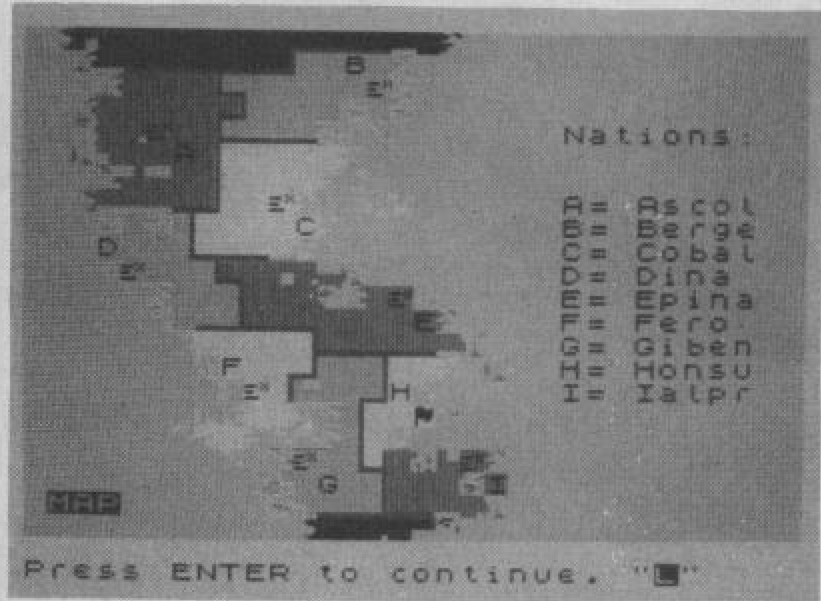

# SUPER-POWER



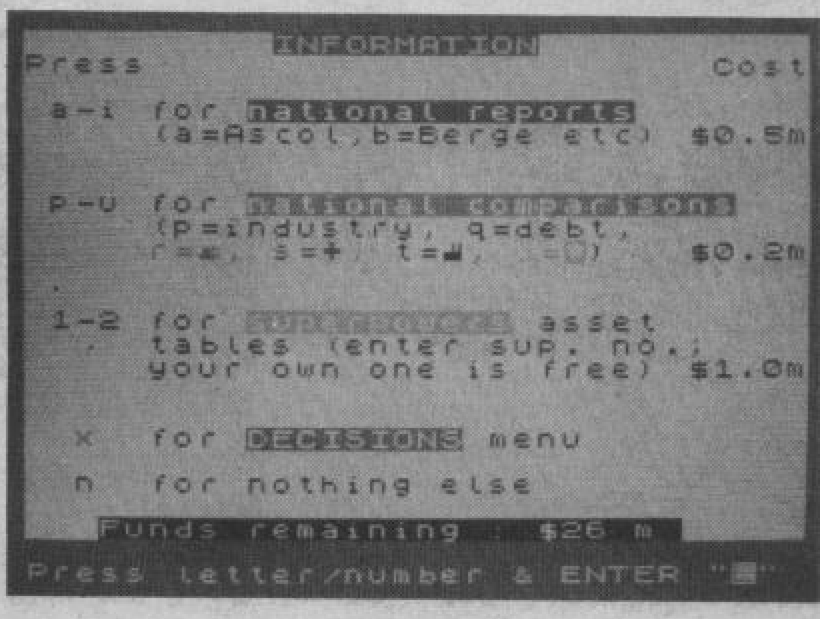
Producer: **CCS**
Memory required: **48K**
Retail price: **£5.95**
Author: **Nicholas Hodges**

After the disappointment of the last two offerings, I was well pleased to come across this one. Once again it's from CCS, virtually the only company working in the strategy games field as their main area. Despite the fact that CCS continue to put out the most diabolical rubbish, along with the occasional goodie, I'd still like to commend them for a CRASH plasticine medal for artistic bravery, in the face of on-going public apathy.

*Superpower* is a good game. It may not be anything spectacular to look at (definitely unspectacular), but it is intelligent and thought-provoking. the game is basically a variant of the old mainframe decision-making game, *Hammurabi*. You play the part of a superpower attempting to increase its influence in a certain region, made up of nine countries; these countries are democracies, dictatorships and one-party states. Each country has a certain output, which is taxed at various levels. The states spend their money on defence, welfare, infrastructure, and police; the multinational companies lobby to have their taxes reduced, but they might get them raised, or they might be nationalised (I remember Suez).




The game really presents a remarkably accurate model of an unstable, developing area such as Central America or the Middle East, with all the Michiavellian comings and goings of the real, expansionist world. I got the feeling when I was playing this that I was in charge of a massive CIA operations to convert the entire region. There are six main ways of gaining power over a nation: by Investment (and bribery) in the economy; by Diplomacy (or counter-diplomacy) by which means you forge military and commercial blocs, or persuade countries to go to war with each other; by Economic lobbying, ie attempting to persuade countries to adopt a more favourable attitude to your investments in terms of taxes, defence spending etc; by Arms Aid; by funding opposition parties; and finally, by overthrowing governments, which can be achieved, among other ways, by hiring a hit man for five million dollars.




The range of options is huge; the author may be very well experienced in running political and economic models to have thought it all out. If all this sounds a bit heavy for your tastes, don't worry — it's actually great fun puzzling out how to maximise your advantages (and profits) in each country, and I got a little vicarious thrill each time my opponents' assets got nationalised. I've got a couple of ideological reservations about the game: it's very materialistic *(What about your house, then, eh? -***Ed***)*, and I personally think it would have been better to have found some other basis apart from profit on which to gauge the success of the player(s). Despite that, though, this is still one of the best decision-making games I have seen, and even if you're not interested in politics, it beats stuff like *The Great Space Race* hands down (the graphics are better too!). If you're getting tired of sprites and shoot-em-ups, and the 48,000 views of an orc's ear lobe leave you yawning, I'd strongly recommend *Superpower* — you keep turning round expecting to see yourself on News at Ten! If I had my way this game would be compulsory for all new recruits to the Foreign Office — I got more out of this than a year's lectures on international relations at university.


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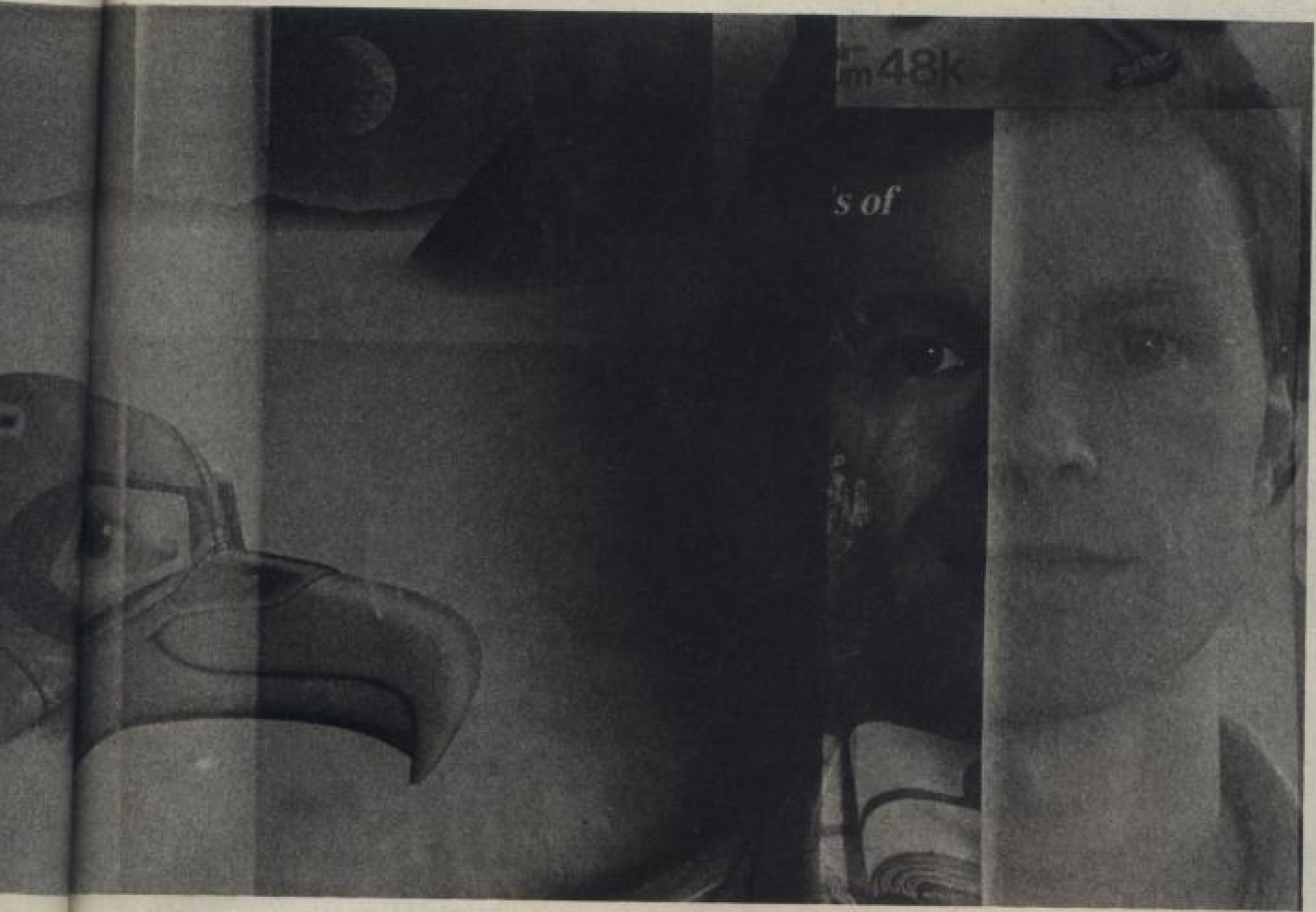
# ON THE COVER

*Packaging has become an important and often enjoyable part of anything that gets sold on a shop's shelf. Books and record album covers have developed into an art form of their own. Recently the same has happened with computer game cassette covers. Often the artists who do this work remain unknown to the general public in all but their style. One artist who has done more than his share of cassette covers is* **STEINAR LUND**. *He has another distinction — he could well be the last person alive to have been paid by Imagine. . . .*





ZONE 49 for Procom - unpublished




*Early readers of CRASH may well remember the issue in which Imagine Software gave away a free poster of the space ship Arcadia flying over a moonscape. The artist was* **STEINAR LUND** *and Imagine kept him waiting months in the queue for payment. But at a time when no one was getting paid by Imagine, Steinar's girlfriend rang up and put the pressure on. Steinar got paid — he was probably the last person to get money out of the dying software company. Fortunately, getting money from most of his other clients has been less of a problem!*

*Steinar (30) was born in Bergen, Norway and first came to England in 1964. 'My father was some sort of engineer on the Royal Norwegian Yacht, then he was offered a job on the Thorensen car ferries. I was 10 when I first came over.'*

*He studied interior design at Kingston College of Art, but decided in the end to 'have a go' at painting. 'I spent a year just building up a portfolio, then went abroad for a while and when I came back I got involved with the games industry. I knew Nick Lambert and John Hollis of Quicksilva before the actual computer game thing really got going. I knew they were starting something so I did some roughs without them asking and they were pretty chuffed with those so that's how I got to do the first one.'*

*The first one was* **QS Defenda**, *which Steinar thinks was probably also the first games cassette cover in colour. After that he did the* **QS Asteroids** *and designed Quicksilva's colour QS logo. That was in 1981 and the games were for the ZX81. When he returned from abroad he found Quicksilva had expanded considerably and so had the market generally. He produced Quicksilva covers for* **Xadom, Smugglers Cove** *and* **Games Designer**

*Visiting the computer fairs eventually brought contacts with other software houses like Melbourne House (for whom he designed the cover of* **Classic Adventure**), *Procom and Fantasy. 'I first met Paul Dyer of Fantasy at the 10th ZX Microfair at Ally Pally. He wasn't too interested at the time, but later I got a call from him. The first work was the compilation poster of* **Beaky, Pyramid and Doomsday Castle**'.

*Then, of course, there was the cover of* **Backpackers**. *Recently, Steinar has completed a Fantasy cover for* **Blue Tunnel**. *'I haven't seen the game though. The brief was that it was in a blue tunnel, with the red rings which you sort of had to blast away, but I have no clear ideas as to what the game is really like.'*

*It seems often to be the case that a designer will not see much of the product that he is painting covers for, although Steinar likes to see as much of a game as possible. 'It's best to see something even if it's just part of the screen. There are various approaches; you can either try to depict what's going on in the game, or just try to put across*

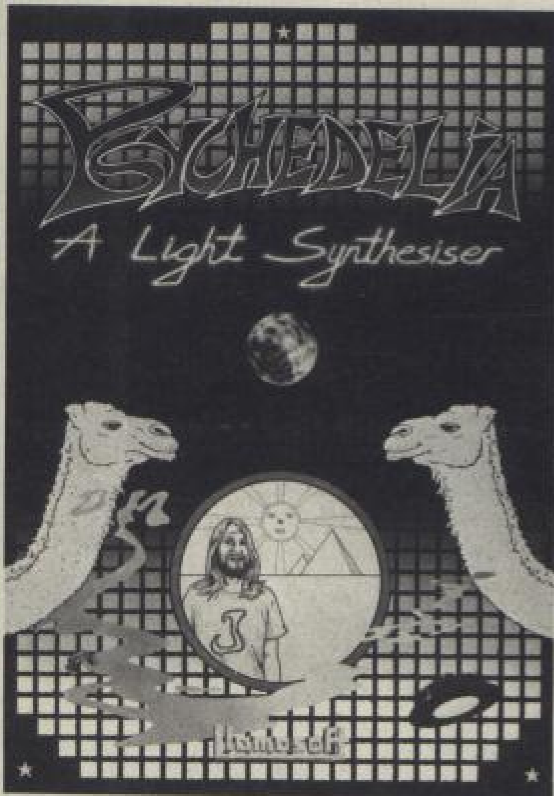
Beaky and Steinar



BLUE TUNNEL for Fantasy

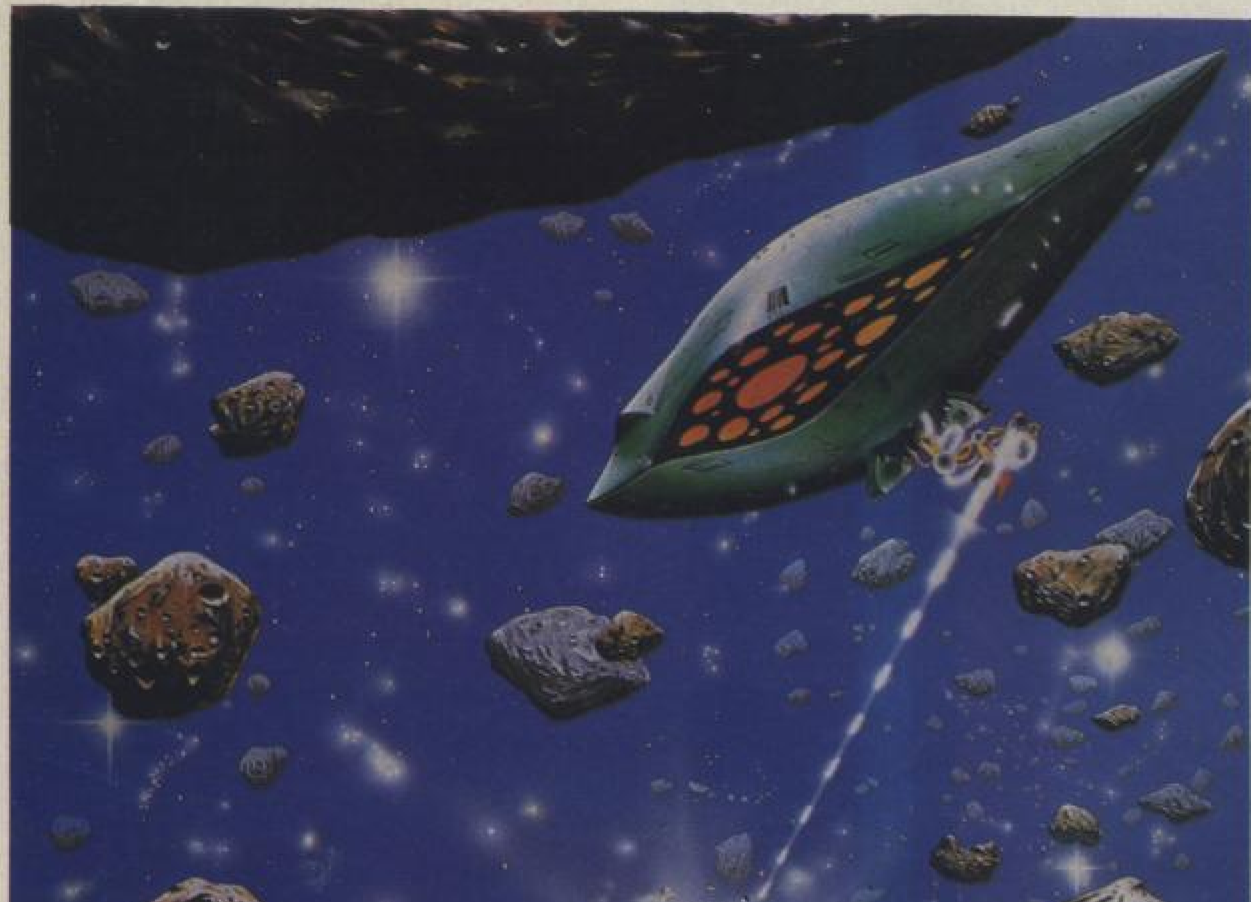


DRAGONSBANE for Quicksilva




PSYCHEDELIA for Llamasoft





QS ASTEROIDS for ZX 81 (Quicksilva)

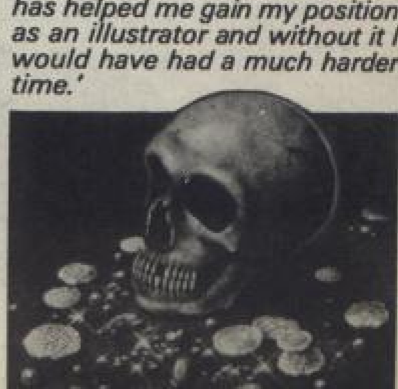
*the basic idea of the game. I did get to see* **Dragonsbane** *(Quicksilva) pretty much completed, and the cover is based largely on the screen graphics.'*

*Part of a designer's problem is one of time, and especially in the games industry, software houses can want artwork done in a very short time. 'The fastest was a painting I did overnight, that was a Melbourne House book cover for the Commodore 16. The longest was about 4 weeks on* **Dragonsbane**. *If an idea comes quickly you can get that down and execute it.'*

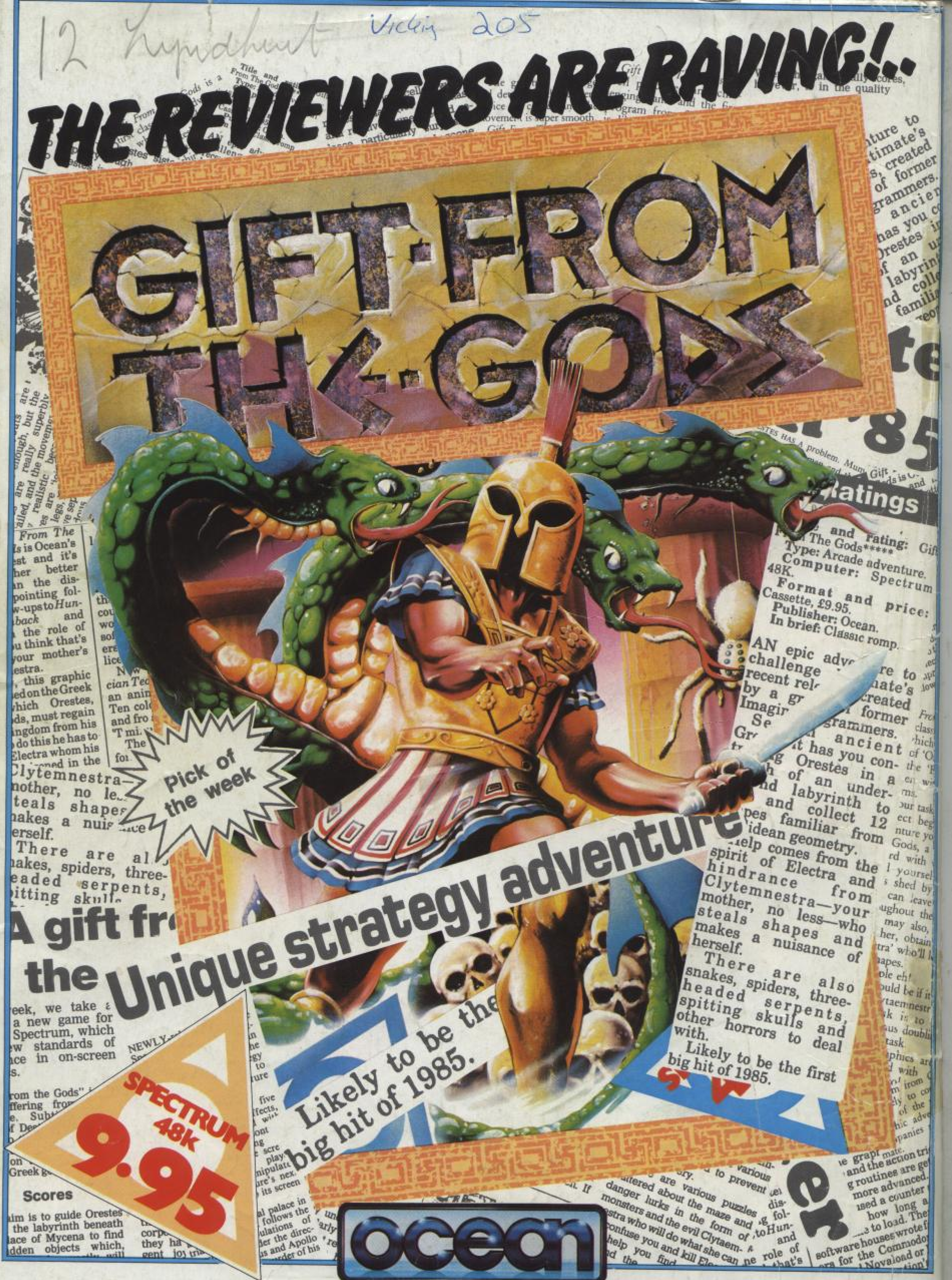
*Two of Steinar's early artistic influences can still be seen lingering in much of his work; Salvador Dali, the Spanish surrealist, and Chris Fosse, who became famous for his highly detailed space junk on sci-fi book covers. He starts by doing pencil sketches, then a pencil mockup which is transferred to board before it is all airbrushed. Finishing touches may be applied with a hand brush. He uses a Japanese Olympus airbrush and it is sprayed, translucent inks which give such brightness to the finished work.*

*Steinar, who does have a Spectrum, finds little time for playing games on it, but uses it instead for designing computer graphics in conjunction with a British Micro Graphpad. At present he is working on a new game for Quicksilva called* **Fantastic Voyage**, *or* **Blood and Guts** *as it will probably be known. 'I think it's a good one because there are a lot of aspects to it. It's a very original game. I have done the cover for it and the loading screen. I trace off the actual painting, reduce it, put it onto the Graphpad and so onto the Spectrum. I change things around so the attributes fit better.' He is also designing many of the graphic characters used in the game, working to pre-set specifications by the programmer, John Edmonds.*

*In the computer games field there are many aspiring programmers, but there are also as many aspiring artists who would like to design covers and posters. What advice does Steinar have to give them? 'I would first of all find out from maybe an art college what sort of skills you may have inherent, and to find out what options you have got and whether you have anything worth selling. But it doesn't always mean if someone says No, that you're not good enough. You don't have to accept that because I was told that and I didn't accept that. There are people who work slower than you and those who work faster. If you work faster and there's plenty of work around then you earn twice as much as somebody else. I'm certainly living on it and the games industry is actually what has helped me gain my position as an illustrator and without it I would have had a much harder time.'*




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THE REVIEWERS ARE RAVING!..
GIFT FROM THE GODS
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A gift from the
Ratings
Title and rating: Gift From The Gods*****
Type: Arcade adventure.
Computer: Spectrum 48K.
Format and price: Cassette, £9.95.
Publisher: Ocean.
In brief: Classic romp.
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SPECTRUM 48K
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